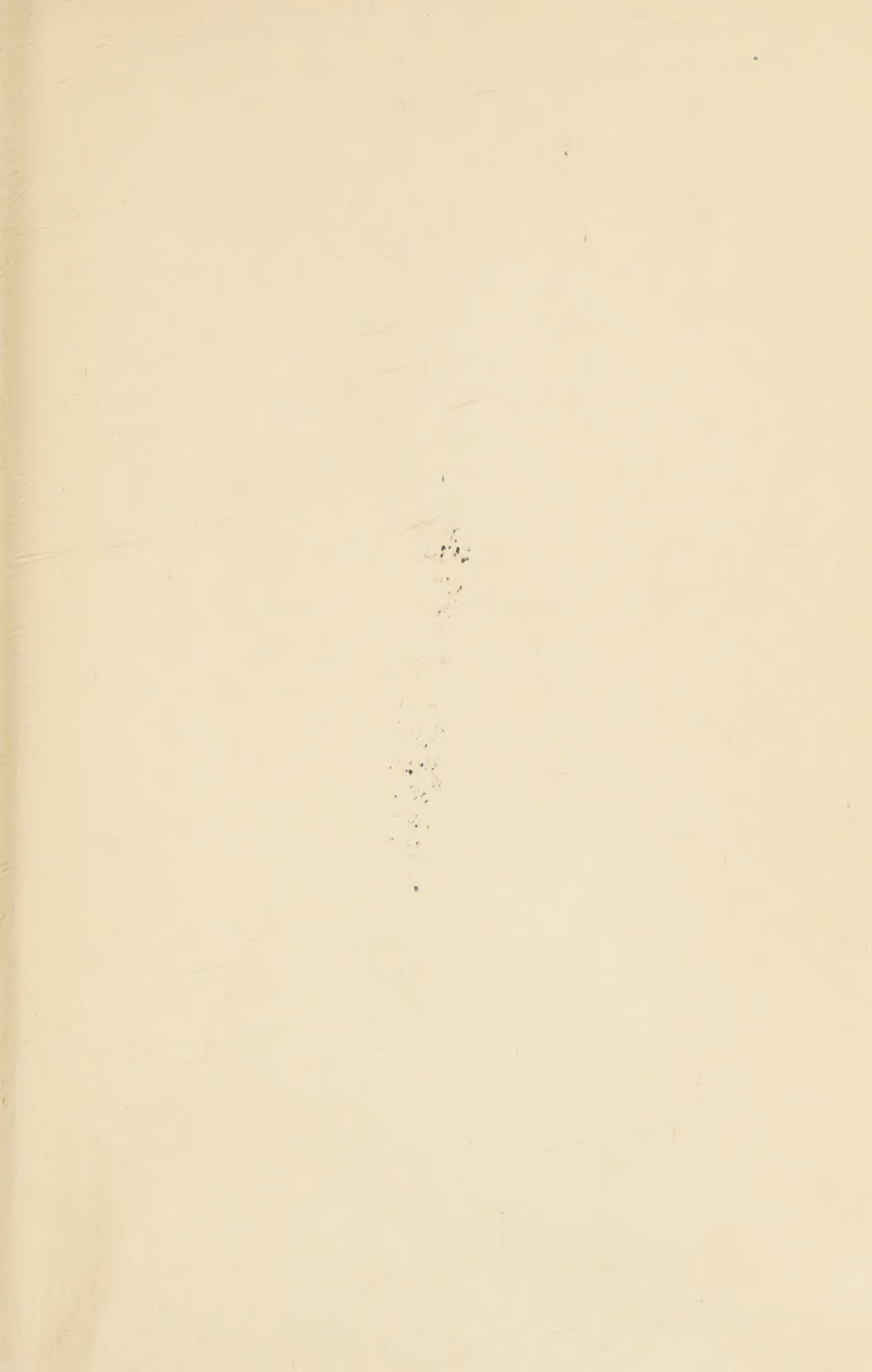


One of
the Family

KENNETH WEBB







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ONE OF THE FAMILY

ONE OF THE FAMILY

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

KENNETH WEBB



NEW YORK

LONDON

D. APPLETON & COMPANY

MCMXXVI

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ONE OF
THE FAMILY

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A humorous play satirizing American family life, and having genuine humor both in situation and dialog. The plot deals with the problem of relatives in the home of a newly married couple.

812

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TO
MY FAMILY

Because, thank Heaven, they are
nothing like the one in this play, this
book is affectionately dedicated.

ACT I.—Living room in the Adams home, Boston,
A late afternoon in spring.

ACT II.—Henry Adams' home, just outside Boston.
A late afternoon in fall.

ACT III.—The same.
A few minutes later.

THE CAST

As produced under the management of John Tuerk, at the Forty-ninth Street Theatre, New York, and subsequently at the Eltinge Theatre, New York.

GEORGE ADAMS	<i>Raymond Van Sickle</i>
MAGGIE	<i>Beulah Bondi</i>
PENELOPE ADAMS	<i>Leila Frost</i>
LUCY ADAMS	<i>Georgia Backus</i>
MISS PRISCILLA ADAMS	<i>Louise Closser Hale</i>
IRENE ADAMS	<i>Mary Phillips</i>
FRANK OWENS	<i>Fleming Ward</i>
HENRY ADAMS	<i>Grant Mitchell</i>
JOYCE SMITH	<i>Kay Johnson</i>
MARTIN BURKE	<i>Edward Donnelly</i>

ONE OF THE FAMILY

ACT I

The Adams home, Boston, Massachusetts. A late afternoon in spring. The scene is the living room of an old-fashioned Boston mansion that has seen better days. At the right, from the actors' point of view, are the large folding doors leading to the dining room. At the rear, a little to the left are the doors leading to the hallway and the front door which is off to the left.

The front of the house is on the left, as is shown by the two large windows which take up all that side of the stage. The late afternoon sun shines through them. The staircase comes down from the right into the center of the room.

All the furnishings are somber and old-fashioned. A secretary desk is between the windows. A round table is in the center of the room, flanked by two old-fashioned chairs. To the left of these near the windows is a large armchair. An old-fashioned sofa is at the right some little distance in front of the dining-room doors. A small table on which is a Rogers Group is by the stairs and a hatrack can be seen through the hall doors. On the walls hang the portraits of the ADAMS family—all the eldest sons. Over the dining room door is one of SAMUEL ADAMS of revolutionary fame. There is a Puritan, a Civil War officer, a gentleman of the period of 1812, another of about 1840, and over the secretary the father of the

ONE OF THE FAMILY

present family. There are also two portraits of colonial ladies. All are stern and forbidding. Boston reserve and respectability are reflected in all the furniture and draperies. As the curtain rises GEORGE ADAMS enters. He is a man of about twenty-five years of age, dark, medium height, and is dressed in a conservative business suit. He hangs his hat in the hall and comes to the table, center. A copy of the Boston Transcript is in his hand. He looks over the mail on the center table but finds nothing for himself. He looks around and calls.

GEORGE. Maggie! (*Waits—crosses to dining-room door.*) Maggie! (*Calls upstairs.*) Irene! Aunt Priscilla! Hello! Any one home? (*MAGGIE enters. She is the family retainer, a woman who has been with the ADAMS family all her life. She is thin and angular, her manner is taciturn, and her tongue is sharp.*) Didn't you hear me call?

MAGGIE. Well, I'm here.

GEORGE. Where is every one?

MAGGIE. They're all out, Mr. George.

GEORGE. Henry back yet?

MAGGIE. No, sir! We expected him all morning and when he didn't come, Miss Priscilla was very much worried.

GEORGE. Do you know where my wife is?

MAGGIE. I haven't seen Miss Irene since right after breakfast. She said she was going to the dressmaker's.

GEORGE (*sits on sofa and opens his newspaper*). It's great to come home early to give your wife a pleasant surprise and not find her. (*Bell rings.*) Perhaps that's she now. (*MAGGIE starts for front door.*)

MAGGIE. Perhaps. (*She goes to the door and a moment later she is heard speaking.*) Why, Miss Pen,

ONE OF THE FAMILY

where's your key? (*She reënters with PENELOPE ADAMS, the youngest of the ADAMS family. She is about twenty and more up-to-date than any of the members of the household. She is pretty and tries to be up-to-date in everything. She places packages she carries on table by stairs. MAGGIE repeats.*) Where's your key?

PEN. Aunt Priscilla won't let me have one any more. She's afraid I'll lose it.

MAGGIE. I guess she's right.

PEN. I don't see why you say that. I only lost three last winter. Got a dollar and a quarter?

MAGGIE. Land sakes, no. (*Starts for the dining room.*)

PEN. Wait a minute, Maggie. (*MAGGIE stops, disgruntled. PEN crosses to GEORGE.*) Hello, George. Kiss me on the cheek. I have an awful time keeping the shape of my lips just right.

GEORGE (*busy with the newspaper*). Who said anything about kissing you?

PEN (*sarcastically*). Sweet brother! (*Changing tone.*) Stake me to a dollar and a quarter?

GEORGE. What for?

PEN. To pay the taxi. Henry'll give it back to you.

GEORGE. You certainly are the limit. (*Gives her the money.*)

PEN (*hands it to MAGGIE*). Give it to the chauffeur, Maggie. Ninety cents for the fare, and the rest for himself. (*MAGGIE starts for front door.*)

GEORGE. Gee—you're extravagant. (*MAGGIE stops.*) A thirty-five cent tip.

PEN. Small change looks so cheap. Go on, Maggie, or the ninety cents will be a dollar. (*MAGGIE goes, humming, very much off key.*) Maggie's mad.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

GEORGE. How do you know?

PEN. Haven't you noticed that whenever she's really annoyed, she sings?

GEORGE. You call that singing?

PEN (*going to table by stairs, taking out her vanity case and powdering nose, etc.*) For want of a better name.

GEORGE. Since when did you start taking taxis?

PEN. I always do after a matinée. The street cars are so crowded.

GEORGE. I have to take them.

PEN. Only when your flivver is out of order. And even though you are anæmic, you're not a frail woman. Where's Henry?

GEORGE. He's not home yet.

PEN. Aunt'll be pleased. She expected him at noon. (*MAGGIE reënters with a large dry goods box. PEN starts for it.*) For me?

MAGGIE. For Miss Adams.

PEN. Put it in her room.

MAGGIE. It's one-fifty-nine—

(*PEN turns quickly.*)

PEN. Tell them to leave it. Henry will send a check when he gets home.

MAGGIE. It's C.O.D. Maybe Mr. George would pay for it.

GEORGE. All right— Here's two. (*Hands MAGGIE two dollars.*)

MAGGIE (*disgusted*). A hundred and fifty-nine!

GEORGE. Good Lord, I haven't any hundred and fifty-nine. Thank you for the compliment.

PEN (*taking box*). I wonder what aunty has been blowing herself to now. Try and amuse the man, Maggie, 'till he comes. Take him to the kitchen and give him a cup of tea.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

MAGGIE. Tea! He's colored.

PEN. Give him some watermelon.

MAGGIE. I'll see if he'll wait. (*Exit, humming again.*)

PEN. A delightful disposition! (*Opening box.*) I wonder if this is anything I could use.

GEORGE (*putting down newspaper*). You're becoming more impossible every day. The idea of opening your aunt's package.

PEN. Go on—you know you're dying to see what it is. If I didn't look after myself in this house no one else would. They can talk all they want to about the baby of the family being the pet, but take it from me, it's the bunk! I'm going to get what I can while the getting is good. I've noticed that when you get older, all you get is left! (*Takes out an evening wrap.*) Not so bad—not so bad.

(*MAGGIE enters from hall, looks at wrap, is about to examine it when PEN snatches it from her hands—MAGGIE goes to dining room.*)

GEORGE. What is it?

PEN. Looks like an evening wrap. Don't know what aunty'd want it for. But it'll be great for me at the dances next season. Of course I'll have to shorten it a bit, and—

(*As she is draping it around herself, LUCY ADAMS enters from the front door. She is a girl of about twenty-eight. She is cold, stern, and sarcastic, an echo of all her aunt's policies. She feels quite certain that every one in the world except her aunt and herself are all wrong, and is always delighted to be able to show her disapproval. She dresses well, but quietly. Her contrast to her younger sister is quite marked. She bustles in with a very businesslike air.*)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

LUCY. Where's Henry?

GEORGE. Not home yet.

LUCY. What'll I do? I need a dollar for my taxi.

PEN. Let George do it.

LUCY. Would you mind, George?

GEORGE. I would. Here. (*Hands money to her.*)

You two certainly have the "gimmies."

(*He crosses to window, pushing PEN out of his way as he passes.*)

LUCY. Henry'll give it to you when he comes. (*Goes to dining room door and calls.*) Maggie! (*Sees PEN draping the cloak.*) For heaven's sake, Pen, what have you been buying now? That's much too old for you.

PEN. It isn't mine. It's aunty's.

LUCY. Goodness. It's way too young for her.

PEN. Just about right for you, eh?

LUCY. Hold your tongue. You have entirely too much to say for a child of your age.

PEN. Don't rub it in about my age. I don't about yours.

(*MAGGIE enters from the dining room.*)

MAGGIE. Did any one call?

LUCY. I did. Give this to the taxi man. (*Hands her money.*)

MAGGIE. What's the trouble? Everybody here paralyzed?

(*She goes off singing to front door.*)

LUCY (*picks up post card*). It's strange about Henry. We expected him home at noon. Poor aunty's been quite upset. (*She sits on sofa.*) She had a post card from him.

PEN. When?

LUCY. After you'd gone. In the afternoon mail.

PEN. I should think that would have been cause for

ONE OF THE FAMILY

rejoicing. First word any one's had from him in three days.

GEORGE. What's the matter with punctilious Henry? Nothing like this has ever happened in the family before.

LUCY. Aunty has written or wired every day, and this is all we've heard.

(MAGGIE crosses stage on way to dining room.)

PEN (*taking post card*). And this was dated over a week ago. (*Examining it.*) And only mailed day before yesterday. It's all smudged as if he'd carried it around in his pocket and forgotten it. (*Sits on settee.*)

GEORGE (*crosses to Pen*). Let's see it, Miss Sherlock. (*Takes it from her.*)

LUCY. It gave aunty a terrible shock—to think he'd write anything like that.

GEORGE. I can't imagine Henry writing anything undignified or ungentlemanly. (*Reading.*) "The Adirondacks—June 10th"—that's right—a week ago. "Having fine time—wish you were here. Henry." What's wrong with that? Sounds nice and Henryesque.

LUCY. Don't you see the picture of where he wishes she was?

PEN (*looking at it*). Oh, gee! *The county jail.* Wish you were here! Ha! That's priceless.

GEORGE (*hands card to PEN*). Rats. Henry never meant that.

PEN (*hands cards to LUCY who puts it on sofa*). He hasn't that much sense of humor.

LUCY. It was very thoughtless of him.

PEN. He's been thoughtless for some time. He's forgotten our allowances for two weeks.

LUCY. Aunty is frightfully worried.

GEORGE. And yet she goes and buys a hundred and

ONE OF THE FAMILY

fifty-nine dollar thing like that. Well, I suppose Henry can afford it. I know I couldn't.

PEN. Not with that extravagant wife of yours you couldn't.

GEORGE. She's no more extravagant than either of you.

LUCY. Don't be ridiculous. She is always getting something new to dazzle us with. Let me see the cloak, Pen. (*Attempts to take cloak from PEN.*)

PEN (*holding cloak at her shoulders*). Wait a minute. I got it first. I'm not through with it.

LUCY (*insisting and seizing it*). You'll get it all dirty. Give it to me.

PEN (*pulls it away*). Try and get it.

(*LUCY again seizes it.*)

GEORGE. Aunt won't have any cloak when you're through with it.

(*MAGGIE enters from dining room.*)

MAGGIE. The man says he can't wait any longer. He'll be back in half an hour as a special favor to me.

PEN (*who has captured the cloak*). Oh, well—here it is. (*Stuffing it in box.*)

LUCY. I haven't seen it yet.

PEN. Then fork over the hundred and fifty-nine.

LUCY. I can tie it up much better than you can.

PEN. Who says so? (*Pushes her away.*) Take her away, George, before I do her an injury.

(*She finishes tying up the package and hands it to MAGGIE who starts to go out just as AUNT PRISCILLA enters. AUNT is a woman over fifty—a real old-fashioned Bostonian who lives in the past. Her clothes are good, but there is a primness about her that is fatal to style. She tries to be sweet and always gets her way by being pathetic rather than cross. She rules the family with the iron*

ONE OF THE FAMILY

hand in the glove of velvet. She is a chronic invalid—in her own mind and really believes in her heart that she is the most abused person in the world.)

AUNT. What is it, girls?

MAGGIE. A C.O.D., ma'am. I was giving it back to the man. Will you make out a check?

AUNT. Didn't you ask Mr. Henry?

LUCY. He isn't home yet.

AUNT. Not yet! And I have a taxi outside waiting for two dollars and twenty-five cents.

PEN. You, too?

AUNT. Somehow I seem to have spent all I had.

PEN. George will lend it to you.

AUNT. Henry will be glad to refund it when he returns.

GEORGE. How much?

AUNT. Two dollars and a quarter. Lucy, will you give this to the man?

LUCY (*passing it to PEN*). Pen, you're nearer. Take it out, will you?

PEN (*stops MAGGIE before she goes left*). Here you are, Maggie. And tell the man not to forget to bring the package later.

(MAGGIE, *angry, sings, exits to front door—crossing with package a moment later to dining room.*)

AUNT. I thought when we didn't see Henry by noon, he'd be here by now. (*Suddenly changing subject and speaking to PEN.*) Penelope, when I was a girl, young ladies didn't sprawl like that.

(PEN *looks injured and sits primly in chair.*)

AUNT (*going back to her original subject*). Something must have happened to him. (*Sits on sofa.*)

GEORGE. He's probably broken down somewhere.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. I always said he shouldn't have bought that car.

LUCY. I don't mind his having a car, but at least I think he could have bought a seven-passenger instead of a runabout.

AUNT. He has never stayed away like this before without letting us know.

GEORGE. Perhaps he's on the road and unable to let you know.

AUNT. That's kind of you, George, making excuses for your brother, but he has always found some way to write or wire before. Something has happened to him. I shouldn't have let him go on this dangerous motor trip without one of us to look after him. He's like a child when it comes to doing anything for himself. (*Bell rings—rises.*) It's a message from Henry. He's dead. I've had a premonition of evil ever since I received that post card of the jail.

GEORGE. Don't get excited, aunt. I'm sure there's no cause for alarm.

AUNT. How can you sit there like that when your brother is in danger? Only to-day I read of an unknown man found beside an overturned car. Perhaps it was Henry. (*Bell rings.*) Why doesn't that woman go to the door?

LUCY. She's probably at the back returning the package.

AUNT. She knows how nervous it makes me to wait. (*Sinks onto sofa.*) Salts. My smelling salts!

LUCY. Pen, get your aunt's smelling salts. (*Goes to front door.*)

PEN. George, get aunty's smelling salts.

GEORGE. I don't know where they are.

AUNT. Oh, never mind, I can die.

LUCY. Calm yourselves. It's Irene.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

(*Stays in door. Enter IRENE ADAMS, GEORGE'S wife. She is about twenty-five, a little blond, fluffy person who tries by her way of dress, etc., to be as babyish as possible. This, however, is merely on the outside. Inside she is as hard as nails, selfish and calculating. She talks baby-talk when she thinks it is effective. MAGGIE enters and seeing that the bell has been answered returns to dining room.*)

IRENE. Hello, everybody. (*Very effusive to GEORGE.*) Georgie, darling! (*Comes to him and kisses him.*) You're home early.

GEORGE. Where have you been?

IRENE. Down town. Frank Owens brought me home in his car. I just happened to meet him on the street. Would you mind if I asked him in?

AUNT. Really, Irene, I'm so upset.

GEORGE. Some other day. Aunt doesn't feel very well. (*Starts to read paper.*)

IRENE. Oh—poor darling aunty. (*Rushing to her and gushing.*) I'm so sorry. What's the matter? Can I get you an aspirin? I wouldn't have disturbed you for worlds. I only thought you'd be interested hearing about Henry.

(*GEORGE and PEN rise. Exclamations of various kinds.*)

GEORGE. Where is he?

LUCY. What about him?

PEN. What's happened to him?

} together

AUNT (*excited*). Henry—he isn't—He's all right?

IRENE. I should say so. Frank met him in the mountains and was telling me all about him.

AUNT. What about him?

IRENE. You'd be surprised. But Frank tells it so much better than I could.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. Ask him in at once. Lucy, get Maggie to serve tea.

LUCY. Pen, ask Maggie to make some tea.

PEN. Auntie asked you. Why pass the buck to me?

IRENE (*pulls GEORGE out of chair*). George—you ask Frank in—there's a dear.

GEORGE. You know I don't like him.

IRENE. You shouldn't feel that way. He likes you very much. Please, precious. Just for Lovie! (*Petting him.*) He's in his Packard—parked just behind your flivver. (*Powders GEORGE'S nose.*)

GEORGE (*going*). Oh—all—right!

PEN. Tell Maggie about the tea, George.

GEORGE. I shall be charmed.

(*GEORGE grumbles and as he goes gives her a look of annoyance.*)

AUNT. Do I know Mr. Owens?

IRENE. You must know of him. He's everywhere. That is—everywhere that's somewhere. His uncle is—you know—that oil king or automobile manufacturer—I forget his name— He's from—somewhere out west, I think. You *must* know.

AUNT. I suppose I should from your very vivid description.

IRENE. George says the uncle's name is a household word, like Ford or Babe Ruth or those other financiers.

LUCY. Babe Ruth's not a financier. He's a football player.

PEN. Baseball—stupid.

LUCY. What's the difference?

PEN. About fifty thousand a year.

AUNT. I hope he hasn't come to tell us that Henry has been jailed for wild driving.

PEN. Don't worry about Henry, aunt. Of all the punctual, methodical, systematic—

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. That's why I'm worried.

(GEORGE *ushers in* FRANK OWENS. FRANK *is tall, blond, and handsome. He is well dressed, perhaps a little too well dressed. He is somewhat of a climber and is apt to be patronizing. He is the kind of a man that women like but men don't.*)

GEORGE. You do the introducing, Irene. You know how I do it.

IRENE. Oh, George, dear, you know you always do it beautifully.

GEORGE. I'll tell Maggie about the tea. Excuse me. (*Exit to dining room.*)

IRENE. Mr. Owens, this is my husband's aunt, Miss Adams—Miss Lucy Adams—and our little Penelope. (*All bow, acknowledge introductions. PEN is disgusted at being classed as a child and sinks back in her chair.*) We're all here except Henry.

LUCY. Do sit down, Mr. Owens. We're all so anxious to hear about him.

FRANK (*sits beside AUNT on sofa*). Really—there isn't much to tell. I saw him day before yesterday. He was starting to motor home just as I was leaving by train.

(IRENE *sits in chair by table.*)

AUNT. Was he ill?

FRANK. On the contrary. He was very chipper.

PEN. Henry chipper! That's a laugh.

AUNT. Any news of my nephew would be a great favor, Mr. Owens. All we have received from him in over a week is this post card—of a municipal building.

IRENE. I'm not surprised that he hasn't written, aunty dear. From what Frank told me, Henry must have been having rather a busy time.

AUNT. Busy? It's his vacation.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

FRANK. He's been busy all right—rushing a girl.
(*Excited exclamations from all.*)

PEN. Gee! What!

LUCY. I can't believe it. } *together*

AUNT. A girl! Impossible! }

LUCY. Henry doesn't like girls.

FRANK. He gave a good imitation of liking this one.
(*Enter GEORGE.*)

IRENE. Frank says they were together all the time.
Walking, motoring, golfing, canoeing, dancing—

PEN. Henry dancing? He dances like a fish.

AUNT. But Henry has never cared for girls. He
has always loved his sisters, of course—but other girls
have always seemed to embarrass him.

FRANK. Miss Smith didn't seem to.

IRENE. Frank said it was the talk of the hotel. He
simply monopolized her every minute.

AUNT. Is this some joke of yours, Irene?

FRANK. No—really, Miss Adams. Rumor had it
that they were engaged.

AUNT. Why that's impossible. Henry wouldn't
think of getting engaged without asking me first.

IRENE. I don't know about that, but Frank said
that if they weren't engaged, they ought to be.

ALL. What?

(*Exclamations of surprise, etc.*)

AUNT. Oh!

GEORGE. Irene! } *together*

LUCY. What! }

PEN. My word! }

FRANK. Please—don't quote me as if I had intimated
that there was anything wrong.

IRENE. Well, you said he was driving her back to
Boston in his car.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT (*rises horrified*). Driving her back? To Boston!

GEORGE. A *two-day* trip!

LUCY. And no chaperon?

AUNT. Penelope, go help Maggie with the tea. (FRANK *rises*.)

PEN. Oh, aunty! That "leave the room" stuff went out with the bustles!

AUNT. Run along, dear. (*Speaking sweetly, but shaking her finger and frowning at PEN when FRANK isn't looking.*)

PEN. It's just getting interesting. If my brother has had an affair, don't you suppose I want to hear about it?

AUNT (*again speaking sweetly*). Don't get aunty angry, dearest. (*Same business of shaking fist at her when FRANK's back is turned. Drags PEN to her feet.*)

FRANK. Really, Miss Adams, there's nothing to make a fuss over. I wouldn't have said a word if I hadn't thought everything was all right.

AUNT (*confronting OWENS below sofa*). My dear Mr. Owens, I don't know what part of the country you come from, but here in Boston we hardly consider it the thing for a young man and a young woman to take a trip overnight—from one day to the next—un-chaperoned.

FRANK. Why—er—it's done every day.

AUNT. Not in our family it isn't.

FRANK. Of course, I'm not sure it *was* all the way. Perhaps just from one town to the next—

IRENE. But you said—

FRANK. I said I saw them start out together, and he told me that *he* was on his way back to Boston. You're putting your own construction on the rest of it.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. What other construction could there be? We never should have let Henry go on his vacation alone. And in the spring—

LUCY. Who was the girl? Smith, didn't you say her name was?

FRANK. Yes—and a very charming young lady. She has been my uncle's private secretary for over a year.

AUNT. A nobody! (*She is quite overcome. Crosses to back.*)

FRANK. Martin Burke's private secretary could hardly be a nobody, Miss Adams. Hers is a very responsible position.

IRENE. That's the name I was trying to think of. Frank, tell aunty how well known your uncle is.

(*He laughingly starts to protest.*)

GEORGE (*disgusted at her*). Everybody knows the Martin Burke chain of dry-goods stores.

AUNT. Smith! A stenographer! Lucy, telephone for a lawyer. We'll have to get Henry out of this.

GEORGE. You're making a mountain out of a mole-hill, aunty. Henry isn't the marrying kind.

AUNT. Don't be indecent. You're speaking about your brother. Of course, as a gentleman, he'll want to marry her.

(*MAGGIE enters from dining room.*)

GEORGE. I don't mean a thing about Henry. He's been thrown in contact with this girl—just a mild flirtation—proximity—you know—

AUNT. Henry never flirts!

MAGGIE. Don't you want your tea?

LUCY (*annoyed*). What? (*Trying to impress the caller.*) Serve it in here—on the tea wagon.

MAGGIE. Oh, glory, I couldn't be bothered with that

ONE OF THE FAMILY

thing. I have the dinner to cook. If you want tea, it's on the dining-room table. (*Exit singing as before to dining room.*)

AUNT. Wherever it is, I'm sure we need it. Please pardon her, Mr. Owens. Servants are such a problem these days.

FRANK. Don't apologize. I understand perfectly. She hasn't been with you very long.

PEN. Only about twenty years.

AUNT (*silences her with a look. Showing the way to dining room.*) Mr. Owens—

(*Bell rings. All stop on their way to the dining room.*)

ALL. Henry!

AUNT. No—he wouldn't ring the bell. (MAGGIE *enters from dining room.*) Perhaps it's a wire. Go on, Maggie. (*Hurries her off. There is a general feeling of anticipation and excitement.*)

HENRY (*off*). Hello, Maggie.

MAGGIE (*off*). Glory be! Mr. Henry.

LUCY. It is Henry.

GEORGE. The prodigal has returned.

PEN. I can't wait to ask him about his sweetie.

AUNT. Don't you dare say a word to him.

GEORGE. Better let aunt quiz him first.

(*Enter HENRY ADAMS, center. He is a man of about thirty—medium-sized, medium-colored hair, medium-colored eyes. He is well dressed, conservative, the kind of man one can always depend on. He is now a bit timid about the reception he will receive.*)

HENRY (*at door*). Well—what is it? A party?

LUCY. You rang the bell?

HENRY. I left my key in my other clothes.

AUNT. Now I know something's wrong.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

HENRY (*greets her*). Hello, aunt. You're looking fit.

AUNT. I'm feeling miserably. Much you care though. We haven't heard from you in a month.

PEN. It gets longer every time she tells it.

AUNT. Every time I tell it, it *is* longer.

HENRY (*kisses LUCY*). I've only been away three weeks.

LUCY (*greeting him. MAGGIE goes upstairs with grip.*) We didn't know when you were coming home. We've been terribly worried.

PEN (*as HENRY greets her*). Yes—I'm down to my last cent, too.

HENRY. I told you I'd be back to-day.

AUNT. At noon!

HENRY. Had to change my plans. (*Greets GEORGE and IRENE.*) You can't tell about a car, eh, George? (*GEORGE grunts a forced assent.*)

IRENE. You know Frank Owens, I think.

HENRY (*sees him for the first time.*) Oh, yes. (*Very coldly.*) How are you, Owens.

AUNT. Mr. Owens was telling us of the good time you were having.

HENRY (*at once suspicious*). Was he?

AUNT. So good that you forgot all about your family.

MAGGIE (*downstairs*). All the cold things are getting hot and all the hot things are getting cold.

(*MAGGIE exits. IRENE and FRANK follow to dining room.*)

IRENE. Come along, Frank.

(*GEORGE follows—stops at door.*)

HENRY. Don't go, George. I want to speak to you.

PEN. Come on, Henry, tell us how you've been playing Romeo.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

LUCY. You see, Henry, she's more spoiled than ever.

PEN (*pointedly to HENRY*). Well—I'd rather be spoiled than ruined.

(PEN and LUCY *exit*.)

AUNT. Your tea, Henry?

HENRY. I've had some, thank you, aunt.

AUNT. Then I'd like a word with you first. You can talk to George afterwards. (GEORGE *goes, glad to follow* IRENE.) Now, Henry—what's the matter? (*Pulls him down beside her on sofa.*)

HENRY. What's the matter with what?

AUNT. With you? You've always wired. You never forgot your key before. What's this I hear about you and some women?

HENRY. Has that fathead Owens been shooting off his face?

AUNT. Henry! Such language from a Harvard graduate!

HENRY. What's he doing here?

AUNT. Irene brought him here—with the only news of you we've had of you in ages.

HENRY. I suppose it's all right—but I wanted to tell you in my own way.

AUNT. Then it's true?

HENRY. About Joyce and me? Yes.

AUNT. Mr. Owens said her name was Smith.

HENRY. Joyce is her first name.

AUNT. A strange name.

HENRY. I think it's sort of pretty.

AUNT. You drove her down from the mountains.

HENRY. Yes.

AUNT. Alone?

HENRY. Why—yes.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. Oh, Henry—my poor boy—you didn't know what you were doing.

HENRY. Oh, yes, I did!

AUNT. How could you with none of us there to advise you? But I'll send for a lawyer. He'll get you out of it.

HENRY. I don't want to get out of it.

AUNT. You think you're doing the honorable thing, but. . . .

HENRY. Good, Lord, aunt—I don't mean what you mean. I asked her to marry me, because I love her—love her better than anything in the world.

(In his enthusiasm, he almost gets poetic—that is as far as an ADAMS could get poetic.)

AUNT *(horrified)*. Better than your family?

HENRY. That's different. I love my family—but Joyce means everything to me! Everything!

AUNT. Everything? You've been brought up a good Episcopalian, and that sounds sacrilegious.

HENRY. I don't mean to be. I have a great respect for whatever powers there be, but my love for Joyce is more personal.

AUNT. But who is she? Who are her people? There are all kinds of Smiths in the world.

HENRY. She's an orphan.

AUNT. Is that all you know of her?

HENRY. And the sweetest girl in the world.

AUNT. You've asked a girl to marry you and you don't know one thing about her except that she is a girl! Mr. Owens said she was a stenographer.

HENRY. A private secretary.

AUNT. Yes, I know. To that notorious Martin Burke.

HENRY. Good heavens, aunt. He's famous—not notorious.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. Any man who has as much money as he has is notorious.

HENRY. He's made it all by hard work. When he came to this country twenty years ago he didn't have a cent. You have to give him credit for what he has done—

AUNT. How could any one become so rich honestly?

HENRY. But aunt, dear, what has that to do with Joyce?

AUNT. Birds of a feather. A person is known by his associates.

HENRY. I only wish I had the good fortune to work for him.

AUNT. You're not thinking of leaving your present employment, I hope. The same position your father died in.

HENRY. Don't worry. I haven't the chance. I have only met Mr. Burke once—and then he gave me the devil for taking his secretary away from him.

AUNT. It isn't like you to do this without consulting me.

HENRY. But you're not marrying her, aunt.

AUNT. To think that you—of all people—should do this preposterous thing!

HENRY. What's preposterous in a man's getting married?

AUNT. You never thought of it before.

HENRY. I never met Joyce before.

AUNT. But none of us have seen her.

HENRY. That's easily remedied. She's over at the hotel now, waiting for me to tell you all about it. I'm going to call for her at six o'clock. I want you to ask her to dinner.

AUNT. It's your own home. You can do as you wish. But don't ask me to see her. (*Beginning to feel*

ONE OF THE FAMILY.

sorry for herself, she gradually works herself up during the following scene.)

HENRY (*rises*). I was afraid you wouldn't understand.

AUNT (*taking out handkerchief*). We've all been so happy here together, and now you want to bring a stranger into this house—some one none of us know—

HENRY (*facing aunt*). When a man marries, he usually consults his heart, not his family. And as to bringing her into the house, we are going to have our own home.

AUNT. You're going to leave us? George and Irene live here. I don't see why you—

HENRY. I think it wiser.

AUNT. But what will you do without your family to look after you?

HENRY. Really, aunt, I think a man of my age should be able to look after himself.

AUNT. Not you, Henry.

HENRY. Then I'm afraid Joyce will have to struggle along with me the best she can.

AUNT (*sobs*). The boy that has been just like my own son. Haven't I given up my whole life to you children? What have I done to deserve this?

HENRY. Aunt—please—

AUNT. When you're old and no one wants you—you'll understand.

HENRY. I can't bear to see you like that. Please. (*Sits beside her.*) Here I was, so happy, and wanting you to share my happiness, and— (*She sobs.*) Please, aunt! (*She sobs louder. Rises.*) For Pete's sake! (*She becomes more emotional.*) George! Lucy! Come here will you? (*He tries to pacify her as GEORGE and LUCY enter from dining room.*) Aunty, please—

LUCY. Aunty dear, what is it?

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. Henry's deserting us. He doesn't love his family any more. He's thrown us aside. We're to be turned out of our home.

HENRY. No, you're not! You're going to stay right here. Joyce and I are going to have our own home.

LUCY. Don't shout! Do you want Mr. Owens to hear you insulting your aunt?

HENRY. George, did you go through this when you got married?

GEORGE. You might have spared aunty's feelings, knowing how delicate she is.

AUNT. Don't mind me, dears. When he comes to his senses, he will remember what he has always said—that no woman could ever take the place of his aunt and sisters.

HENRY (*exasperated*). No one's going to take their place. Great Scott!

AUNT. Oh! You never swore at me like that before.

(*Bell. GEORGE and LUCY exclaim in horror—AUNT is almost overcome—PEN enters right.*)

GEORGE (*to PEN*). What do you want?

PEN. I can't hear a word in there.

GEORGE (*stops PEN*). Go back.

PEN. If Henry has been compromised, I want to hear about it too.

(*MAGGIE enters and crosses to door.*)

LUCY. What will Mr. Owens say?

PEN. I guess he's said it already.

AUNT (*with the manner of a martyr*). I'm all right now. (*Sighs.*) I am resigned.

LUCY (*to HENRY*). You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Tell aunty you're sorry— Maybe she'll forgive you.

HENRY. What is there to forgive?

ONE OF THE FAMILY

LUCY. You're a brute!

MAGGIE (*reënters with the package. AUNT sobs loudly. LUCY sits beside AUNT.*) It's that C.O.D. again.

(*AUNT sees package, begins to cry.*)

AUNT. Send it back, Maggie. There is no use my asking Mr. Henry now. Unfortunately I've overdrawn my account.

HENRY. You know I always want you to have everything I can give you. What's the bill?

MAGGIE. One fifty-nine. (*MAGGIE hands bill to him as the AUNT sniffs and the others stand around eagerly.*) One hundred fifty-nine dollars! What is it? (*Burst of tears from AUNT.*)

LUCY. A beautiful evening wrap for aunty.

HENRY. But she never goes out in the evening.

AUNT. I never go out in the evening because I have nothing to go out in. Take it back, Maggie— Now that we have all been cast aside, we can expect no assistance.

HENRY. Nothing's going to be different. (*Aunt sniffs.*) If you really want it, you shall have it.

(*PEN and LUCY brighten up as he takes out his check book. PEN rises and takes box from MAGGIE.*)

GEORGE looks reproachfully at AUNT.)

AUNT. I never would have ordered it, had I known you were going to be married. But you have always urged me to buy things. You said you wanted your family to look well—to do you justice.

HENRY. Of course. (*Takes out fountain pen and starts to write check at table center.*)

AUNT. I wouldn't think of taking it now. Don't urge me.

HENRY. Let's call it a peace offering. (*Writing.*) One hundred and fifty-nine.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. Well, it's too late now if you've written it.
(*Rises and stops weeping.*)

HENRY. Of course. (*Gives check to MAGGIE who exits.*) Now, run upstairs and put some cold water and witch hazel on your eyes, and I'll go over to the hotel and get Joyce and we'll all be a big happy family. (*Looks around hopefully and smilingly but meets only cold looks. Lucy has taken cloak from the box and is trying it on.*)

HENRY. Here—here's your beautiful wrap. (*Takes it from LUCY and holds it for AUNT.*)

AUNT. Oh, I can't try it on now.

HENRY. You'll make the Queen of Sheba turn green with envy.

AUNT. Oh, Henry, you always know how to get around me. (*Goes to foot of stairs.*) Are you going to bring the girl to dinner?

HENRY. You'll all be nice to her?

AUNT (*reproachfully*). Oh, Henry—to any friend of yours! (*Goes upstairs.*) She shall be just like one of the family. (*Exit.*)

(MAGGIE enters—hears last speech and exits singing.)

HENRY starts towards front door.)

PEN. Henry, did you mean what you said to aunty—that nothing would be different? That you'd still help me when I've overdrawn my account?

HENRY. Have you overdrawn again?

PEN. Just two checks.

HENRY. How about you, Lucy?

LUCY. A trifle.

HENRY (*thinks first, then*). I'll fix it up this time, but I want you to realize that from now on you'll have to keep within your own incomes. A married man can't be as extravagant as a single one.

LUCY. So—your sisters are an extravagance. I

ONE OF THE FAMILY

suppose we'll all have to scrimp so you and your wife can enjoy yourselves. (*Takes box from table.*)

GEORGE. You know, Lucy, it is Henry's money. He doesn't have to give it to you.

LUCY. Of course. I wouldn't think of depriving his wife of anything on my account.

(*LUCY goes upstairs with box.*)

PEN. Well, don't worry. I won't hurt your feelings by refusing. (*Follows LUCY off.*)

HENRY (*to GEORGE*). Now, *you* give me hell.

GEORGE. You spoil them. You give them too much. I suppose now that you're getting married, they'll expect me to hand over too.

HENRY. Well, I *was* going to ask you if you couldn't help me out a bit.

GEORGE. Now, really—why should I? Each of them gets a monthly check from father's estate, just as we do. That should be plenty, seeing that they haven't any rent to pay. I don't see why you should give them an extra allowance out of your salary and I think you're foolish to do it. I'm sure I wouldn't. My salary barely takes care of Irene, and you'll find you need every penny of yours if you're really going to have a place of your own.

HENRY. Yes, Joyce and I have decided to take a little place in the suburbs—Dorchester or Newton—not too expensive.

GEORGE. Owens said she was Martin Burke's secretary. I've always wanted to meet that man. Now, maybe I'll have the chance. He's Owen's uncle, but I'll never meet him through him. There's a queer duck for you—Owens. I suppose he means all right.

HENRY. I don't like him either.

GEORGE. Do you suppose you *can* get me an intro-

ONE OF THE FAMILY

duction to Burke? There's a man I'd like to work for. Wouldn't you?

HENRY. Sometimes I think I would—and then I wonder if it's worth while taking a chance. I have a good position.

GEORGE. Where you'll never make a cent more than you're making now.

HENRY. I don't want to give it up to try something I may not be fitted for.

GEORGE. How do you know you're fitted for marriage? You've never tried it.

HENRY. If I can keep an aunt and two sisters happy for years, don't you think I stand a chance with *one* wife?

GEORGE. I suppose so. (*Pause.*) Nearly every one has a system for a successful marriage. What's yours?

HENRY. Joyce and I have made an agreement that in all little things I will defer to her, and in all large matters she'll give in to me.

GEORGE. That sounds reasonable.

HENRY. I'm going over to the hotel now to get her. Be a good fellow, and try to get them to be nice to her. Irene knows how it is.

GEORGE (*rises*). Sure. Oh, Henry, before you go—I forgot. Aunt and both the girls came home in taxis to-night. They didn't have the change so they borrowed from me. Said you'd fix it up. I wouldn't have said a word about it, only I'm a bit strapped myself.

HENRY (*looks at him quizzically*). How much?

GEORGE. Oh—five dollars will cover it. (HENRY *hands him a bill.*) Thanks. Do as much for you some day. (*Turns.*) Oh, and don't forget, you're going to ask her to introduce me to Burke. (HENRY *goes to door, nods.*) Oh, yes—what was it you wanted to speak to me about?

ONE OF THE FAMILY

HENRY. I was going to ask you to break it gently to the family. About Joyce and me. But it doesn't matter now. Some one else broke it first. Smashed it in fact.

(HENRY goes. GEORGE looks after him with a pitying air. Enter FRANK and IRENE from dining room.)

FRANK. I'm terribly sorry to rush away like this, but I have a dinner engagement. I'll come again if I may. So charming and homelike. You two fellows should be very thankful you have a family.

GEORGE. We are.

FRANK. My regards to Joyce Smith when you meet her. Charming girl.

GEORGE. Henry has just gone for her.

FRANK. So sorry not to see your aunt and thank her for her hospitality.

IRENE (to GEORGE). Georgie, love, run up and tell aunty Frank has to go. (GEORGE starts to object.) Please darling.

GEORGE (looks a minute—then). All right! (He is annoyed and hurries upstairs.)

FRANK (looks around—sees they are alone). Irene? To-morrow afternoon? The same time?

IRENE (looks around nervously to see no one is listening). Yes.

FRANK. We'll motor out to the golf club again?

IRENE (looks around). Yes.

FRANK (seizes her hand—kisses it). Wonderful!

(She withdraws her hand, just as GEORGE enters from stairs, almost breathless, he has hurried so.)

GEORGE. Aunt says to apologize for her. She's a bit upset—you know—about Henry.

FRANK. I understand perfectly. See you very soon—both of you. Good night.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

GEORGE *sees him out and then returns.* IRENE *goes to sofa, sits.*)

GEORGE. I don't like him.

IRENE. Why, darling—

GEORGE. Neither does Henry.

IRENE. Well, if Henry doesn't approve, I suppose we must *all* shun him. I can understand, though, why *he* doesn't care for Frank.

GEORGE. He doesn't think he amounts to much.

IRENE. That isn't it. Frank used to be sweet on his uncle's pretty secretary.

GEORGE (*meaningly*). Oh!

IRENE. But *you* haven't any reason for disliking him.

GEORGE (*sits beside her*). Don't let's see too much of him—that's all.

IRENE. All right, darling. I was only trying to *help* you.

GEORGE. How?

IRENE. His uncle and everything. You're so clever and capable that you'd show people, if they'd give you a chance. I thought perhaps Frank might suggest it to his uncle. But if you say so, darling, we'll never see that nasty horrid man again.

GEORGE. Don't be so childish. (*Starts to rise, she holds his hand and as he stands by sofa she kneels on sofa beside him.*)

IRENE. Is Georgie Porgie cross with little wifie? Little wifie cry if Georgie Porgie cross with her.

GEORGE. No! I'm not cross.

IRENE. Then smile for me. Nice smile. Please. Pretty please. (*He smiles.*) There now, we'll all live happy ever after. (*Bell rings.*)

GEORGE. That's probably Henry and his fiancée.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

IRENE. And I'm not fit to be seen. (*Takes her hat, etc., from table.*) I'm going upstairs to fix up. (*Starts upstairs.*)

GEORGE (*following her*). Can you imagine Henry marrying any one?

IRENE. Perhaps with her around, the family will leave *me* alone for a while.

(*They go upstairs as HENRY, after a slight pause leads JOYCE in. JOYCE is a very pretty girl in her twenties, smartly dressed, capable, efficient, lovable, and altogether charming. MAGGIE enters.*)

HENRY. Here we are, darling. The ancestral home of the Adamsons. (*Laughs, draws her to him and kisses her. Pointing to pictures on wall.*) In their name, I welcome you.

MAGGIE. Huh? How'd you get in?

HENRY. I found my key.

MAGGIE. Then why did you ring the door bell? You know I have all I can do to get the dinner ready without traipsin' to the door every minute.

HENRY. Sorry, Maggie. It won't occur again. (*MAGGIE starts off.*) Wait a minute, I want you to meet my—

MAGGIE. Is she stayin' to dinner? Land sakes alive! I don't know what's come over this house to-day. Tea—on the tea-cart, extras for dinner, no warning—I'll be an old woman before my time. (*Exit, singing, up the stairs.*)

HENRY. You must forgive her. Her bark is worse than her bite. She's been with us so long she thinks she runs the house.

JOYCE. She isn't a servant—she's a retainer.

HENRY. Is the old place at all as you expected?

JOYCE. Just exactly as you described it. But now

ONE OF THE FAMILY

that I'm here, I'm frightened. (*Sits.*) It is lovely, isn't it? So peaceful—

HENRY (*sits beside her*). Want to change your mind and live here after all?

JOYCE. No, dear. I think I will like our own little home even better than this. I worked for a lawyer once, and he told me that interfering families cause more divorces than cruelty, desertion, and infidelity combined.

HENRY. But my family is different.

JOYCE. Of course. You've told me so much about them, I feel I know them already. I hope they'll like me.

HENRY. How could they help it?

JOYCE. If they're anything like you, I'll adore them. (*He kisses her hand.*) I've been so lonely all my life for a family, I'll just adopt yours.

HENRY. They're rather a lot to adopt.

JOYCE (*rises*). Tell me who they are. (*Turns around and faces the portraits on the wall—HENRY turns and explains them to her.*)

HENRY. Great old boys, aren't they? Used to awe me when I was small. Aunt used to threaten me with their displeasure when I didn't obey. I always expected to see them come to life—

JOYCE. Like Ruddygore.

HENRY (*pointing*). Great-great-grandfather Samuel—one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He was the sternest. He was our Revolutionary ancestor, and I was always taught to believe that George Washington was a very poor second to him. And the others are all the eldest sons right down to my father there—and this place is reserved for me. (*Pointing to audience as fourth wall.*)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

JOYCE. Who were the ladies?

HENRY. Great-aunt Susan and great-great-aunt Martha.

JOYCE. But where's your mother?

HENRY (*primly*). Mother wasn't born an Adams.

JOYCE. I see! If one only achieved an Adams or had an Adams thrust upon her she wasn't admitted to the gallery.

HENRY. That's right. (*Crosses to desk near windows.*) You never saw mother's picture, did you?

JOYCE. No.

HENRY (*takes picture from desk drawer, shows it to* JOYCE.) Pretty—wasn't she?

JOYCE. Beautiful—but she seems so sad.

HENRY. I wish I'd known her better. I think we would have understood each other. I wasn't very old when she died, you know—

(*He looks at the picture affectionately—JOYCE puts her arm around him and kisses his cheek as she draws him towards her. He is just about to kiss her, when AUNT PRISCILLA is heard.*)

AUNT (*upstairs*). Henry—is that you?

(*He hastily puts picture away. Both rise.*)

HENRY. Yes, aunt, we're here.

(*Both are a bit nervous. He tries to reassure her, takes her hand as the family enter in line on the stairs. AUNT is followed in line by LUCY, PEN, IRENE, GEORGE and even MAGGIE comes down. They all stand round, massive, cold and stern—it is almost as if the pictures had come to life.*)

HENRY. Aunt—this is Joyce.

AUNT (*crosses to her*). How do you do, Miss Smith.

JOYCE. Oh!—not Miss Smith—please. (*Hurt by the rebuff.*)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

HENRY (*trying to be pleasantly informal*). And here's Lucy, and Penelope and Irene and George. (*Sighs with relief now that the ordeal is over.*)

PEN. How did you do it? She's a good looker.

LUCY. You mustn't mind her, Joyce. She usually doesn't know what she is talking about. (*There is a moment of embarrassment at LUCY's tactlessness.*)

HENRY. But this time she does. You're right, Pen. I don't know how I did it, but I did. (*Broad grin at JOYCE.*)

JOYCE (*coming to HENRY*). I've never had a family of my own, and Harry told me so much—

ALL. Harry!

(*Exclamations of surprise, sarcasm, etc.*)

PEN. (*laughs*). Harry.

AUNT. Harry!

LUCY. Who!

GEORGE. Well—

} together.

(IRENE giggles.)

JOYCE. What's the matter?

LUCY. No one has ever called him that before.

AUNT. We don't go in much for nicknames.

JOYCE. He seemed like Harry to me.

PEN. Well, if he's *Harry* to you, he's going to be *Hank* to me.

AUNT. I hear that you and my nephew motored down.

JOYCE. Oh, yes—and it was wonderful. All the trees in blossom.

AUNT. Did I understand that you were an orphan?

JOYCE. Yes.

AUNT. Perhaps that is the reason you do not realize that such a proceeding might be considered—er—rather—unconventional.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

HENRY. Joyce and I aren't going to be conventional. We don't believe in long engagements or large weddings, and we intend to have a honeymoon that will last forever.

AUNT. Don't talk like a silly child. We have always done things properly in this family and I'm sure Miss—

HENRY. Joyce.

AUNT (*continuing*). —will agree with me, that a long engagement will, enable you both to find out if this is just a spring flirtation—

HENRY. But, aunt!

AUNT. Please do not interrupt. You have said that you are an orphan, my dear, so I take the liberty of advising you. I have never been a mother, but I have taken a mother's place with all these children, so I feel I have had sufficient experience to advise you. If at the end of a year you and Henry still care for each other, it will be time enough to talk of marriage though for my part I think that a large church wedding is the only decent kind for people of breeding—

JOYCE. But Harry—haven't you told—

HENRY. There can't be any long engagement or large wedding.

AUNT. Why not?

HENRY. Don't you understand? We *are* married—

AUNT. Married! (*Excitement by all—exclamations, etc.*) By whom? In what church?

HENRY. We couldn't find a minister. We were married by a justice of the peace.

AUNT. Justice of the p—— Henry, pack your bag and go to the club. Lucy, get the army cot up from the basement and put it in my room. (*LUCY exits.*) Until the large church wedding can take place, *Miss Smith* will sleep with me.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

(HENRY sinks in a chair as AUNT takes JOYCE by the hand and leads her towards the stairs.)

CURTAIN

(On picture, MAGGIE is seen going upstairs with cot, pillows and blanket. The others have all gone but HENRY, who is still sitting sadly in the chair.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

Home of HENRY ADAMS just outside Boston. A late afternoon in fall. A very pretty modern living room—small but livable. There is a door leading to the hallway and front door just left of center. Right of center is a glass door leading to the sun porch. On the left, near the front of the stage, are the double doors leading to the dining room. On the right side of the stage is a fireplace with a small bookcase on either side. The whole is bright and cheery, compared to the ADAMS mansion. At the windows and doors are chintz curtains. The stairway comes down into the room on the left side of the stage. In front of the fireplace is a large overstuffed couch and behind it a table on which are magazines, and a small lamp with a hideous shade. Two vases of horrible design are on each side of the mantel. A golf cup and a bowl of flowers are also on the mantel. In front of the grate are poker, tongs, etc. In the hallway is a table and a Windsor chair which has seen better days. A small desk stands between the door to the hall and the door to the sun porch on which is a vase of flowers, an ugly gargoyle statuette and an album. There are three chairs as per diagram and a small table with a lamp beside the chair furthest to the left. Over the mantel hangs a picture of The Declaration of Independence. A rather atrocious umbrella stand is beside a small closet which is under the landing of the stairway. There are several pictures and light brackets on the walls. The lights are

ONE OF THE FAMILY

lighted as it is raining outside. JOYCE enters from dining room and crosses to a large picture which is leaning against the couch. The picture is a "nude" and rather "Frenchy." As she enters, she is singing softly to herself. She is dressed in a house dress or bungalo apron. She crosses to a ladder which is between the sofa and the fireplace and proceeds to put a wire on the picture. HENRY enters from hallway. He has on his hat and raincoat and his arms are filled with bundles.)

HENRY. Hello, darling.

JOYCE. Hello, darling. You're home early. (*He kisses her.*)

HENRY (*removes coat*). It's nearly five. What are you doing?

JOYCE. I've stood for that picture Lucy gave us for a wedding present as long as I can. (*Points to atrocious picture of Signing of The Declaration of Independence over the mantel.* HENRY is placing bundles on table, etc.)

HENRY. That's right. With my future employer coming to dinner, we have to be up to the minute. Just think, Martin Burke is our guest. All due to you, darling.

JOYCE. Nonsense. (*Looking over packages on table.*)

HENRY. I never would have had the nerve to make the change without you. In fact, I'd never have met Burke if it hadn't been for you. Darn nice of him to give me this opportunity after I took his (*kisses her*) private secretary away from him.

JOYCE. You deserve it, dear.

HENRY. Here's my last check from the old firm. It won't be so large next week. (*Takes check from pocket.*)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

JOYCE. I don't mind that. (*Takes check.*) You'll have a chance to advance now. (*Again looking over packages.*) Did you bring the fruit and cigars?

HENRY. Everything, I think, including the evening papers and next month's magazines.

JOYCE (*looking at them*). We did need some new ones.

HENRY. Yes—our old assortment looked like a dentist's waiting room. Oh! (*Brings coat down, takes large bottle out.*) And here's something else I brought. You told me how he was always more genial after a couple of drinks, so I got the steward at the golf club to mix me up this bottle of Mr. Burke's favorite brand of cocktails. The kind he said that would make a chipmunk spit in a bulldog's eye.

JOYCE. What would your aunt say?

HENRY. What she doesn't know won't hurt her.

JOYCE (*tidying table*). Did you happen to ask the steward anything about Mr. Burke's preference as to food.

HENRY. He eats anything.

JOYCE. I'm glad of that. Every one in *your* family is on a *diet*—and each one is *different*. What under the sun made you bring this? (*Holds up Town Talk.*)

HENRY (*gets cigars from his overcoat pocket, puts them on console table at chair*). George showed me something in it about Frank Owens—thought we'd be interested. Perhaps there is a catty streak in me, but I don't like that fellow, even though he is Burke's nephew. They're not a bit alike, and anything said against him is music to my ears.

JOYCE (*sits, looks for article*). You mustn't feel that way. Frank is always very polite to you.

HENRY. Very patronizing you mean. He'll never forgive me for stealing you from under his very nose.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

(*As she protests.*) You can't deny it. He was crazy about you. (*As she looks through pages.*) It's on page eighteen.

JOYCE. Oh, yes. (*Reads.*) "Bulldog Owens has been seen very often lately in the company of a very charming young matron. The husband in the case, like the proverbial love, is blind, but friends are beginning to chatter, so who knows when his eyes will be opened? However, even if he does become aware of the indiscretions of his charming better half, it is fortunate for him that the duel is no longer *au fait*, for what chance would a respectable but stuffy business man have against this handsome and athletic Lothario?" Rather nasty!

HENRY. Charming wife of a stuffy business man—might mean us—eh?

JOYCE. You're not stuffy! (*Rises.*) I won't even let you think it. (*Replaces magazine.*) Did you tell George you were going with Mr. Burke? (*Turns to HENRY.*)

HENRY. No—I didn't. He's been pestering me to introduce him to Burke for so long that I thought I'd save a scene.

JOYCE. Did you phone your aunt?

HENRY. I phoned her to ask if we could borrow Maggie for to-night, but telling her about my new position slipped my mind.

JOYCE (*confronting him*). Harry—were you afraid?

HENRY. No—not exactly—but you know what a fuss she'll make when I tell her I'm receiving a smaller salary and will have to cut down on the allowances.

JOYCE (*disappointed*). Oh Harry— (*Sits down.*)

HENRY. Why argue with her? *You* ought to know it doesn't change her opinion.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

JOYCE. Oh, I know you're thinking of the time she wasn't satisfied with our marriage by the justice of the peace, and wanted a big church wedding.

HENRY. Well, if we'd kept still, and not argued, we could have sent out announcements to aunty's friends and everything would have been over. But the more we talked, the more she talked, and what was the result? We had the big church wedding.

JOYCE. She made me feel like a heartless heathen sacrificing you for my own pleasure.

HENRY. It's a shame, darling, but the wedding *did* make her so happy. And it wasn't as bad as you expected, was it?

JOYCE. It was worse. I haven't a relative to my name and very few friends in this part of the country, and when I saw that church—empty on the bride's side, and standing room only on the groom's, I felt like a lamb being led to the slaughter. Butchered to make an Adams' holiday.

HENRY. If I'd only known.

JOYCE. You couldn't help yourself, poor dear. (*Kisses HENRY.*) I think you were as frightened as I was—only they were your family. (*Goes to mantel.*) Even the bridesmaids—Lucy, Penelope and Irene—all wishing I'd trip and break my neck before I reached the altar.

HENRY. Oh, darling—no.

JOYCE. Oh, darling, yes. And your aunt crying as if you were dead.

HENRY. I noticed that. I was afraid we'd have to give out rain checks. And you never told me.

JOYCE (*twisting wire on picture*). What would have been the use? It would only have made you unhappy too.

HENRY. But you're wrong when you think the family

ONE OF THE FAMILY

doesn't like you. I'm sure they do. And you seem to have such a good influence on them. They don't argue with each other as much as they did.

JOYCE. They used to pick on each other. Now they *all* pick on me.

HENRY. Now, sweetheart—is that kind?

JOYCE. I know you think your family is perfect—so don't let us discuss them. (*Changing subject and holding up new picture.*) Do you really like this new picture, or are you only saying so because I bought it?

HENRY (*takes picture*). No, darling. It's a great improvement. I'll hang it for you.

JOYCE (*as he climbs ladder with picture*). Don't fall.

HENRY. I won't with this one. (*Holds up new picture.*) But you wouldn't mind if I took a tumble with this one?

(*He takes old picture from wall and holds that up.*)

JOYCE. If you'll promise to fall on those two hideous vases your aunt gave us— (*Points to vases on mantel as HENRY comes down and puts old picture on couch.*)

HENRY. They are terrible, aren't they? (*On ladder hanging new picture.*)

JOYCE. I've wanted to smash them ever since we got them. I thought you liked them. You raved so about them.

HENRY. Naturally I raved. I got the bill for them.

JOYCE. You don't mean to say that you paid for your own wedding present?

HENRY. I loaned aunt the money. She had overdrawn slightly. We'll take them right down. (*Comes down ladder.*)

JOYCE. It might hurt her feelings not to see them.

HENRY. It hurts ours to see them. (*Takes down vases, puts them on table and regards the rearranged*

ONE OF THE FAMILY

mantel.) At least for to-night, let's show Mr. Burke a good front. Much better! And while we're about it, suppose we say farewell to that lamp from George and Irene?

JOYCE. Oh, yes. Where could they have gotten it?

HENRY. Some one gave it to them for a wedding present and this was their first opportunity to get rid of it. Anything else we could kiss good-by?

JOYCE. That umbrella stand from Pen, and that—that statuette from Maggie. (*Points to gargoyle on desk.*)

HENRY. Poor Maggie. Aunt picked it out for her. That's the thing I've wanted to smash. It grins at me in the most insulting manner. And if you love me, here's one thing more you'll get rid of. (*Picks up album from desk.*) My baby pictures!

JOYCE (*seizes album from HENRY*). I won't get rid of them. I love them.

HENRY. Then for heaven's sake, keep them where I won't have to see them!

(*She puts them back on table as he gathers up the offending presents.*)

HENRY. What'll I do with these? Drop them in the lake?

JOYCE. What excuse would you have?

HENRY. A burglar stole them.

JOYCE. No one would believe a burglar has such atrocious taste. Put them in the hall closet for the time being. We want to have them handy when the family calls.

(*HENRY walks back to the hall closet with them.*)

HENRY. Let's pray for an earthquake to carry them off. (*Putting them in closet under stairs.*) Farewell Maggie—Lucy—Aunty—George and Irene! Rest in peace. Or better still, in pieces. (*Looks at watch.*)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

Now that just gives me time to go down and meet Maggie on the five twenty-seven.

JOYCE. I have some things I'd like you to do in the village if you don't mind.

HENRY (*pauses in the midst of putting on his coat.*). What?

JOYCE (*kissing him*). Just these few things.

HENRY (*smiles*). Delighted! I'll get out the car while you get your list.

JOYCE. It's all ready. I'll put it in your pocket. (*Does so, and then buttons coat for him.*) Be careful not to skid. It's starting to rain. Oh, dear, I've been meaning to sew that button on. (*Noticing the absence of a button on his coat.*) What time are you going for Mr. Burke?

HENRY. I said I'd call for him at the golf club around five-thirty.

JOYCE. Won't he want to stop his game sooner now that it's raining?

HENRY. What's a little rain to a golfer? (*Kissing her.*) Back in a few minutes, dear. (*Crosses to table and gets bottle of cocktails.*) I'll put the cocktails on ice. I hope he won't be afraid of them if I don't drink one myself. It would be sure to go to my head.

JOYCE. I'll mix you one of plain orange juice and a little "Five Fruits." He'll never know the difference.

HENRY *goes to dining room door, stops, returns and kisses JOYCE, who laughs, then he goes, she goes back to her work, sees Town Talk, picks it up again. Bell rings. JOYCE goes to hall, looks out, sees who it is, rushes to hall closet and gets out lamp and replaces it on table, then goes to door.*

IRENE *enters, shaking rain from coat.*

IRENE. Hello, Joyce. I was almost drenched waiting across the street in the rain.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

JOYCE. What were you waiting there for?

IRENE (*takes off coat, puts it on back of chair*). I didn't want Henry to see me. I managed to avoid him on the train.

JOYCE. But why?

IRENE. Because he'd be sure to tell George. Oh, don't be so dense. I made a date to meet Frank, and when Henry came home so much earlier than usual, I had to wait out there to head Frank off.

JOYCE (*surprised*). You and Frank planned to meet here?

IRENE. Well, we couldn't meet at the golf club. Frank's uncle is there to-day. And we'd be sure to run into some of the family in Boston. (*She takes gloves off, puts them on small table, by chair, left.*)

JOYCE. Did you *have* to meet him *anywhere*?

IRENE. Why shouldn't I meet him?

JOYCE. Well, if George didn't want you to—

IRENE. I thought *you'd* surely understand. You used to go around with Frank yourself. He told me so.

JOYCE. Before I was married.

IRENE. You talk just like an Adams. (*Sits in chair.*) George doesn't think it looks well for a girl to be seen in public with any one but her husband—as if it wasn't perfectly all right, because it *is* in public. Besides, Frank is influential. He has promised to introduce George to his uncle.

JOYCE. Still promising?

IRENE. Well, the right opportunity hasn't arrived yet.

JOYCE (*going to large table*). Perhaps that is a good excuse, but is it quite fair to George to allow yourself to get talked about?

IRENE. Who's talking? (*JOYCE holds up Town*

ONE OF THE FAMILY

Talk.) Oh—you've seen *that*? Frank will just about kill that editor. I hope George doesn't see it.

JOYCE (*replaces magazine*). He already has.

IRENE (*rises*). How do you know?

JOYCE. He showed it to Harry.

IRENE. Do they know—

JOYCE. Neither of them suspected. There's something in favor of having a clean-minded husband, isn't there?

IRENE. Don't let them know. Don't even tell Henry! Please.

JOYCE. Don't worry. I'm no prouder of it than you are. I'll see you through this time, but it'll have to be the last.

(*Bell rings.*)

IRENE. That's Frank's ring. *You* let him in. The rain's just about ruined me, I'll run up and use your mirror. And keep a look out for Henry. (*Starts for stairs.*)

JOYCE. You're taking a lot for granted.

IRENE (*stops on landing*). What's the matter? Are you angry because I said I'd be here?

JOYCE. I'm not particularly pleased at your using my house as a meeting place.

IRENE. I was afraid you might be jealous, knowing what good friends you and Frank used to be. (*Goes upstairs.*)

JOYCE. What? Irene! (*Bell.*) Wait a minute—
(*There is no reply, bell rings again, she shrugs shoulders, goes to the door.*)

FRANK (*off in hall*). Hello Joyce!

JOYCE. Come in Frank.

(FRANK and JOYCE enter.)

FRANK. You surely are a sight for sore eyes. Do you know this is the first time I've seen your little place.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

(*Looking around.*) I'll bet it's your taste. Nothing Adamsy about it. (*Places hat on table. Pause.*) I've missed you terribly, Joyce. Honest I have. (*She laughs.*) You believe me, don't you?

JOYCE. If you say so.

FRANK. What do you say to taking a little spin with me some day next week—tea and a dance at some quiet little inn?

JOYCE. Irene's upstairs.

FRANK. What?—Well, what of it?

JOYCE. If she heard, she'd be so disappointed in you.

FRANK. Oh, Irene's all right. She needn't know. How about it?

JOYCE. No—thanks. (*Goes to table.*)

FRANK. Adopted all the Adams traits along with the name? (*She doesn't answer, he laughs.*) I understand your lord and master is going to work for my uncle.

JOYCE. Yes.

FRANK (*following her*). Smooth worker, you are. I was steering George in uncle's direction. I never thought you'd beat me to it. Oh, well, uncle thinks pretty well of my advice. I can make it just as pleasant for Henry. It's up to you.

JOYCE. Is that the same kind of bluff you're giving Irene?

FRANK. I'm not joking. Think it over. You didn't think I was such a bad sort, once. And I haven't changed.

(*IRENE comes downstairs.*)

JOYCE. Don't be silly.

IRENE. Hello Frank.

FRANK. Hello.

IRENE. You came after all.

JOYCE (*gets bundles*). You'll excuse me if I go on with my work. (*Exit into dining room.*)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

FRANK. Say—she *is* moving fast.

IRENE. What's wrong?

FRANK. She grabbed off the job for Henry that I intended for George.

IRENE. Well, if you'd only introduced George sooner.

FRANK. I haven't had the opportunity. Uncle travels around so. (*Starts to sit.*)

IRENE. We can't stay here.

FRANK. But I've just come.

IRENE. Henry'll be here soon, and he'll tell George—They've read that nasty article—and might guess.

FRANK. Not they.

IRENE. Joyce knows.

FRANK. All right, dear. I can say I dropped in to see my uncle, and if she says a word, I'll swear I came to call on her.

IRENE. But that doesn't explain my being here.

FRANK. I'll think up something.

IRENE. And Joyce doesn't want us. I wonder if she *is* jealous. I accused her of it and she was furious.

FRANK (*goes to IRENE—starts to put his arms around her*). What do you care?

IRENE (*pushing FRANK off*). You don't like her better than you do me, do you?

FRANK. You know I'm crazy about you. (*Drawing her towards him.*)

IRENE. Frank—don't—please don't spoil everything.

FRANK. I'm mad about you. (*Kisses her.*)

JOYCE (*off*). Irene! (*FRANK and IRENE separate. JOYCE enters very much excited.*) Irene—you must go at once! The FAMILY!

IRENE. What about them?

JOYCE. They've just driven up. Aunt Priscilla, Lucy, Penelope, George, Maggie and the flivver. (*Goes to closet under stairs to get presents.*)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

IRENE. George? What'll I do? Frank's car is there. They've seen it. What'll I do?

JOYCE (*goes to closet and starts to take out the presents, statuette, the two vases, picture. IRENE follows JOYCE around. JOYCE places statuette on desk.*) Oh, don't ask me. I have my hands full as it is.

IRENE (*to JOYCE*). You must help me. I can't let George see me. (*A long determined ring on the bell. JOYCE gets vases. IRENE stops her.*) Oh, Joyce—please—you know how they are—

JOYCE. Slip out through the sun porch and get away that way when I let them in.

FRANK. May I help?

JOYCE. Put the vases there—on each side of the mantel.

(*FRANK follows instructions. JOYCE gets the picture.*)

IRENE (*by sun porch door*). I see that I'm not the only one who had to hide things from the family.

JOYCE. And change this picture— (*Takes it to him.*) for that. (*Starts for door as FRANK starts to change pictures, taking ladder from where JOYCE left it.*)

IRENE. I'll hide in your car until you come out.

FRANK. Right.

(*JOYCE goes to the door. IRENE goes out through sun porch. FRANK changes pictures and is seated on the ladder hiding behind the new picture as JOYCE admits the family. AUNT enters first, followed by LUCY, GEORGE, PEN and MAGGIE. PEN discovers FRANK on the ladder and calls LUCY's attention to it. The greeting as each one enters is a bit cold.*)

AUNT. When Henry telephoned about Maggie, I realized your inexperience with formal dinners, so we

ONE OF THE FAMILY

decided we would come out and help you. (*She takes off her rubbers.*)

JOYCE. That was very thoughtful. (*She is not overcordial, but they do not notice the sarcasm in her voice.*) You know Mr. Owens, I think. (*Surprised, the family greets FRANK with various degrees of coldness.*) He was helping me decide where I'd hang that picture. (*LUCY looks at GEORGE.*) It would add to the room, don't you think?

AUNT. It would add— (*Sees picture—steps back.*) but would it improve?

JOYCE. Where would you suggest?

AUNT. The attic. You know I don't care for such subjects.

(*Pause. Embarrassment. JOYCE puts picture by fireplace.*)

GEORGE. I'll go down and meet the train. I left word at the dressmaker's that when Irene arrived she was to follow us out.

(*AUNT stops GEORGE from going by a gesture.*)

FRANK. If I can't be of any further assistance, I'll run along too.

JOYCE. Of course. Thank you.

FRANK. May I go the shorter route? I won't get so wet.

JOYCE. Certainly. (*Follows him to sun porch door. The family look at each other meaningly and whisper among themselves. Under cover of handshake, JOYCE warns FRANK.*) Get her to the next station so George will meet her on the train.

FRANK. I'm on. Good-by all.

(*He goes. JOYCE puts step-ladder back.*)

AUNT (*to LUCY*). I'll speak to her. (*To JOYCE*). Where is Henry?

JOYCE. He went to the village to meet Maggie.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. George wants to see him. For some time he has been very anxious to meet Mr. Burke, so when we heard he'd be here to-night, we thought it would be an excellent opportunity.

JOYCE (*coldly*). I hope we have enough for dinner.

AUNT. Oh, we haven't come for dinner. We only came to help. I believe there is some horrible road-house in the neighborhood.

JOYCE. If we haven't enough, we can send for more. (*Crosses to dining room door.*) Oh, Maggie, will you bring me that step-ladder, please? (*Exit.*)

MAGGIE. Yes'm. (*Gets ladder and follows JOYCE out.*)

(*The others look at each other meaningly, lifting eyebrows, glancing after JOYCE, etc.*)

AUNT (*removing cloak which she carefully places over chair*). You were right, Lucy.

LUCY. Of course I was.

AUNT. I never would have believed it, if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. I knew she was silly, but I didn't think she would be indiscreet.

GEORGE. And I thought he was after Irene.

LUCY. Oh, no. Irene told me that it was common gossip that Joyce and Mr. Owens were sweethearts before she met Henry.

PEN (*lounging in chair, left*). I wonder if Hank knows?

AUNT. Of course not. Poor dear Henry is too much in love to see things as they are. I suppose you noticed that *he* was away when Mr. Owens called.

LUCY. He probably waited around the corner until he saw Henry go.

AUNT. He knows his way around the house. "The shorter route"—and did you notice where we found him? On a step-ladder?

ONE OF THE FAMILY

LUCY. Helping her hang pictures. Almost intimate.

PEN. Oh, she's only up-to-date. If I was married to a gloom like Henry, I'd want some one snappy crashing 'round.

LUCY. Pen!

GEORGE. I shall certainly apologize to Irene for my suspicions.

LUCY. Better say nothing about it.

GEORGE (*looks at watch*). It's nearly train time. I'll go and meet her. (*Starts towards hall.*)

PEN. Take me with you.

AUNT. Penelope—no—

GEORGE. Oh, let her go—she needs an airing. (*To PEN.*) You reek of cheap perfume!

PEN. Cheap! That's "Cleopatra's breath." Six dollars an ounce. The man who sold it to me said that all the movie vampires used it.

GEORGE. Well—maybe it photographs all right. (*PEN waves her handkerchief in front of his nose.*) Pfew.

PEN (*imitating FRANK*). Let's take the "shorter route!"

(*They go out through the sun porch.*)

LUCY. I'd better leave our things upstairs so they won't be in the way. (*Takes AUNT'S wraps and starts up the stairs.*)

AUNT. Before you go, just help me move this desk over by the stairs. (*They cross to desk.*) You lift and I'll guide. Not so fast. Remember my high blood pressure.

(*JOYCE enters.*)

JOYCE. What are you doing?

AUNT. Moving Henry's desk.

JOYCE. But he likes it where it was.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. The light should fall over his left shoulder. You don't want him to lose his eyesight?

LUCY (*now by couch*). I think this couch would look better if it were turned around this way, don't you, Aunt?

AUNT (*turns*). Yes. I think you're right. (*They turn couch and table. JOYCE is about to protest.*) You'll like it better yourself, Joyce—after you've lived with it. (*Looks around.*) That chair shouldn't be out there in the hall.

JOYCE. But it's falling apart, and it isn't pretty.

AUNT. Samuel Adams who signed The Declaration of Independence once sat in that chair. My grandfather used to take naps in that chair. (*Brings it in—puts little chair where desk was.*) There now, the place looks more like a home and less like an office.

JOYCE. But really, Aunt—I—

(MAGGIE *enters.*)

MAGGIE. Miss Adams, if you want me to cook the dinner—you'd better tell me what you're going to have.

JOYCE. Oh, yes, Maggie. We'll have grapefruit cocktail, tomato soup.

MAGGIE. Real or canned?

JOYCE. The kind you make so well. Roast beef and brown potatoes. Fried egg plant, corn, lettuce and tomato salad, ice cream, with chocolate sauce, and coffee.

AUNT. You evidently want your husband to die from uric acid.

JOYCE. Henry likes all these things. He chose them himself.

AUNT. You shouldn't allow him to choose. What does he know about dietetics? I never heard such a combination of sugars and starches.

(*Bell rings.*)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

JOYCE. I'll go, Maggie.

(Exit MAGGIE as JOYCE goes up to door and off.)

AUNT. I'll get Maggie started and then I'll dust the part of the house that shows.

(LUCY goes upstairs—AUNT goes to dining room.)

JOYCE (off). Harry, what do you think has happened?

(HENRY enters with his arms full of bundles followed by JOYCE.)

HENRY. Couldn't get at my key with all this junk. Maggie wasn't on the train.

JOYCE. They motored her out.

HENRY. That *was* George's flivver I passed. That was nice of him.

JOYCE. It wasn't only George. They're all here.

HENRY. All what?

JOYCE. All your family—and planning to stay.

HENRY. Not for dinner? Why we only have six of everything.

JOYCE. *You* tell them.

HENRY. But they knew Mr. Burke was coming.

JOYCE. And thought it was a good opportunity for George to meet him. Your aunt said she came out to help me.

HENRY. Why have you changed the room around?

JOYCE. Your aunt did it. You don't like it, do you?

HENRY. Why, yes, it looks rather nice.

JOYCE (*vexed, crosses to table*). I wonder how she'd like it, if *I* moved everything in *her* house.

HENRY. I'm sure she meant it all kindly.

JOYCE. If hell is paved with good intentions, there's a boulevard there named after your aunt. If you'd only explained that you were going to work for Mr. Burke, perhaps they'd have let us have this dinner in peace.

HENRY. Well, you know aunt always likes to be

ONE OF THE FAMILY

present when any of us make any serious plans for the future. She's full of good advice.

JOYCE (*starting towards dining room*). It's a wonder you didn't send for her when you proposed to me.

HENRY. Now, darling, we must try to look on the bright side.

JOYCE. What is it?

HENRY. I don't know, but there must be one. I'll put these in the kitchen and then I'll go back to the village and get a chicken. (*Crosses with bundles towards door.*) Aunt and Lucy never eat red meat—or white bread—and George doesn't like grapefruit.

JOYCE. If your family wants to order *à la carte*, let them go to the inn.

HENRY. We couldn't be inhospitable and turn them out. (*Aunt enters from dining room.*) Hello, aunty dear. See you in a minute. (*Exit with bundles.*)

AUNT. You shouldn't let Henry carry all those bundles. The Adams men have never been used to menial work and Henry's heart isn't any too strong. (*Holds up bottle which she has concealed in a dust cloth.*) What's this? It smells suspiciously like liquor.

JOYCE (*a bit worried*). But—aunt—what would *we* be doing with liquor?

AUNT. That's what I want to know. Henry has never tasted a drop in his life. We have never had any in the house.

(HENRY *returns.*)

HENRY (*puts coat and hat on newel post*). Well, aunt— (*Kisses her.*) How well you're looking.

AUNT. I am not well at all. You remember when I sprained my ankle. I always feel it in the damp weather. Henry, what's this? (*Holds up bottle.*)

HENRY. Why—that? That's polish—polish for the car.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. It smells like liquor.

HENRY. It probably has some alcohol in it for a preservative. (*To JOYCE.*) Take it back, dear. I'll put it in the garage later. (*Hands bottle to JOYCE, who goes to dining room.*)

AUNT. I haven't had a moment's peace, worrying about you since you left home, Henry. (*Takes his coat to chair.*) Ah—button off! (*Shakes her head sadly.*) This place is damp and malarial. Have you put on your winter flannels yet?

HENRY. No—not yet.

AUNT. Your father always used to have his on by Labor Day. You've changed so in your ways, Henry, I hardly know you any more. I want to talk seriously with you. (*He tries to go, she stops him.*) This is the first chance I've had to speak to you alone since you were married. (*He sits in chair center, she in chair left.*) Tell me—are you happy?

HENRY. Never so happy in my life. I couldn't believe it myself at first. So I psycho-analyzed myself to prove it.

AUNT. What do you mean? How?

HENRY. Well, before I was married, I frequently dreamed that I was chasing a car—running and running and never quite able to catch it. Since I've been married—I don't dream it any more.

AUNT. What nonsense! Dream books are for servant girls!

HENRY. You've never read Freud or Havelock Ellis? No, I guess they're a bit modern for you. They explain how a dream comes from a suppressed desire—one that perhaps only your subconscious mind knows. My chasing the car meant that way down deep, unknown to my conscious mind, there was something I wanted. When that desire was gratified, the dream

ONE OF THE FAMILY

left me. All my life I had wanted something, and until I met Joyce I didn't know what it was.

AUNT. Your liver was out of order. What was I going to say—

HENRY. You know that you yourself have often had recurring dreams—wasn't there one about burglars chasing you?

AUNT. I always have nightmares when I eat anything late at night. We're all alike, we Adamses, our delicate stomachs—

HENRY. Freud explains the burglar dream as a suppressed sexual desire.

AUNT (*horrified*). Don't be vulgar! You never found books like that in our library at home. (AUNT *dusts chair she is sitting in.*) I suppose your wife introduced them to you.

HENRY. As a matter of fact I have always wanted to read them but it was only recently that I had the opportunity.

AUNT. Humph! What I wanted to ask you—

HENRY (*rises, puts chair back*). Pardon me, aunt, but I'll have to run back to the village and then stop for Mr. Burke—

AUNT. How did you ever come to ask him to dine?

HENRY (*tries not to catch her eye*). He always plays golf here on Saturdays—so we thought it would be a good idea for him to renew his friendship with an old employee, and sort of get acquainted with a new one.

AUNT (*suspicious*). Who?

HENRY. Oh—didn't I tell you? Oh, no, that's right, I didn't.

AUNT. You never tell me anything any more.

HENRY. I'm going to work for Mr. Burke.

AUNT. You're not leaving the office?

ONE OF THE FAMILY

HENRY (*lightly*). Couldn't work in two places at once, could I?

AUNT. Don't try to be facetious. Why, you've been at the office ever since you left college. It was your dead father's place.

HENRY. What may have been all right in father's time might not be so desirable now.

AUNT. Your father was not one to make mistakes. When you were a little boy, he arranged for the business you were to enter.

HENRY. I have advanced as far as I can there.

AUNT (*brightens*). Oh—you're going to get a larger salary.

HENRY. Not at first.

AUNT. The same as now?

HENRY. Not quite.

AUNT (*annoyed, rises*). You're not leaving a good established position for less money than you've been getting! You're crazy! If you had asked me—

HENRY. George left the firm and went into another business.

AUNT. *You* are the eldest son and should carry on the Adams traditions.

HENRY. I'd like to make a few traditions—not always follow.

AUNT. Well—you're doing it. To leave a fine old position for something none of us know anything about.

HENRY. I know about it, and Joyce says—

AUNT. What can she know? You never used to decide anything without consulting me.

(*Bell rings.*)

HENRY. Pardon, aunt. (AUNT *rises.*) The bell (*Glad of the interruption. Starts for the door.*

JOYCE *enters.*)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

JOYCE (*at foot of stairs*). Do you suppose that could be Mr. Burke? I'm not dressed.

AUNT. But Henry—with a smaller salary, how will you manage? When you give us all our allowances, won't you and Joyce have to economize terribly?

JOYCE (*astonished*). What?

HENRY. I'll talk that over with you later. We'll have to make some new arrangements. (*Going to front door.*)

AUNT (*desperately*). Joyce—do you approve of this change Henry's making?

JOYCE. He knows what he's doing. I never question him in such matters. (*JOYCE goes upstairs and exits.*)

AUNT. But you should question him. Oh, why did I let him get married?

(*HENRY returns with GEORGE and PEN.*)

HENRY. It's George back again.

GEORGE. Is Irene here? We missed her at the station.

HENRY. Is she, aunt?

AUNT. No.

GEORGE. She must have missed the train. I'll go back and meet the next one now that I've delivered this highly perfumed package home again. Say, Henry, I'm mighty glad to get this opportunity to meet Burke. Owens has been promising me I'd meet him for some time.

AUNT (*dusting furniture*). Henry has accepted a position with Mr. Burke.

GEORGE. What?

AUNT. Now he can secure one for you there.

HENRY. Well, er—hardly—that is—

AUNT. Aren't you willing to help your brother?

HENRY. I mean I'll have to make good myself first. (*Putting on coat and starting for door.*)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

GEORGE. Oh, Henry I wanted to ask you. How's your system turning out?

HENRY. My system?

GEORGE. The one you told me about the day you announced your marriage. You were going to give in to her in all small matters, and she was going to let you decide all the big ones. Is it working?

HENRY. Great.

GEORGE. Really?—I didn't think it possible.

HENRY. Perfect. Of course so far nothing big has come up.

(They go out together.)

PEN. Some town this! *(Crosses to table.)* I didn't see a decent looking man at the station. Of all the hick burgs, this is the elephant's tonsils.

AUNT. What an expression! You talk more like a New Yorker every day. It's disgusting!

PEN. I think I'll take a couple of magazines upstairs and read myself senseless 'til dinner time. *(Looks at magazines on table.) Literary Digest, Atlantic Monthly, Review of Reviews!* Oh, here's that book of Henry's baby pictures. What a fine looking oil-can he was. Oh, *Town Talk*—that's better. Call me when it's time to put on the feed bag. *(Crosses to stairs.)*

(Door bell.)

JOYCE *(off stage)*. Oh, Penelope, ask Maggie to go to the door, will you?

PENELOPE. I'll go.

AUNT *(pushing PENELOPE upstairs)*. Maggie's busy—I'll go.

(AUNT goes to front door, admits MARTIN BURKE and FRANK OWENS. BURKE is a man of middle age, slightly gray, heavily built, of Irish birth, businesslike and straight from the shoulder. He

ONE OF THE FAMILY

is dressed in golf clothes and is wet from the rain.)

FRANK. Miss Adams, may I present my uncle, Mr. Burke.

BURKE. Howdy, ma'am. I think we met at the wedding.

AUNT. Oh, yes. Let me take your cap. (*Shaking water off cap.*) Oh—it's wet! I don't think Henry expected you so early. (*Putting BURKE'S cap in closet.*)

BURKE (*to FRANK*). I told you we'd get here too soon.

(*AUNT enters from closet into room.*)

FRANK. I know Henry expected to call for uncle but it was too wet for him to play so I ran him over.

AUNT. He's gone to the village on some household duty, and his wife is dressing. You know how these young women are—leaving everything until the last minute. Pray be seated, Mr.—oh,—Burke.

BURKE (*seating himself*). Thanks. Lovely place, here.

AUNT (*seats herself*). It's rather damp and malarial. I understand my boy has accepted a position with you, Mr. Burke.

BURKE. Your boy—

AUNT. I always speak of him as my boy. I have always been like a mother to the children,—Henry, his brother George, and the two girls.

BURKE. Quite a large family.

AUNT. I can't realize they are all grown up. Even Henry, who is the eldest, has changed so little. Did you ever see any of his baby pictures?

BURKE. I can't say that I have.

AUNT (*rises, takes up album from table and returns*). I gave this book to his wife when they were married,

ONE OF THE FAMILY

as one of their wedding presents. Here he is at four months—sitting in my washbowl. Here he is one year old! He hasn't changed, has he?

BURKE. Well—he seems to have about the same amount of hair.

AUNT. And of course, the difference in clothes.

FRANK. Lack of clothes, don't you mean?

BURKE (*bored*). I'm afraid all babies look alike to me.

AUNT. Here's a better one. Henry at four.

BURKE. Looks like a girl.

AUNT. Kilts were all the style then. And it almost broke my heart when they had to cut his little curls off. Here's my little man at six.

BURKE. I can see the resemblance now. Solemn as an owl.

AUNT. Serious.

BURKE. Frank, isn't that sailor suit a scream? (FRANK *laughs but a look from AUNT silences him.*)

AUNT (*impressively*). And here he is when he was valedictorian at Harvard. (*Proudly.*) What college did you attend, Mr. Burke, if I may ask?

BURKE. College? The college of hard knocks.

AUNT. Oh! I thought I understood from Mr. Owens that you were one of the Plymouth Burkes.

BURKE. No, ma'am. My family came over in the steerage—not the Mayflower.

AUNT (*only abashed for a moment*). Oh, indeed—Here's Henry on his twenty-first birthday. See—the same trustful face. That's one thing you'll find about Henry, Mr. Burke. He still has the same innocent mind he had when a child.

BURKE. My God!

AUNT. He is just as he was when a little boy. He doesn't smoke. He has never tasted a drop of liquor.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

I have always called him our Sir Galahad. People often take advantage of him as you are evidently aware.

BURKE. I don't see why *I* should be aware of it, ma'am.

AUNT. He has always depended on me for advice—until his marriage. Joyce is of course a very sweet girl, but having been your secretary, she is naturally prejudiced in your favor, so when he accepted the position you offered him, without consulting me, I am afraid he rather underestimated his ability in the matter of salary.

BURKE. Do I understand you to mean that your nephew is dissatisfied with our financial arrangements?

AUNT. Well—

BURKE. We went over all that. Because, if he is, we can call it all off—

AUNT. You know the salary he has been getting, and surely—

BURKE. Are you acting on your nephew's request?

AUNT. Well—not exactly. And please don't tell Henry that I spoke to you about it. The dear boy thinks he is such a good business man. But he's really so visionary where business matters are concerned. (*BURKE is getting more and more disgusted.*) Oh, Mr. Burke, in the greatness of your position be generous enough not to take advantage of his modesty. Remember he is still that same little boy sitting in the wash-bowl.

(*She rises. JOYCE enters downstairs.*)

JOYCE. I'm so sorry I kept you waiting.

BURKE. How are you, my dear? Miss Adams has been entertaining me with these pictures of your husband.

AUNT. I have been doing my best to act as your substitute, though you know Henry's aunt has no wish

ONE OF THE FAMILY

to preëempt the prerogatives of Henry's wife. (*Aside to JOYCE as she passes.*) I think I have arranged for Mr. Burke to give Henry his regular salary.

JOYCE (*looks at her suspiciously*). What! (*AUNT goes upstairs and JOYCE follows her.*) Aunt! (*She starts to go after her. AUNT exits.*)

BURKE (*to FRANK*). What kind of a place have I gotten into, anyway? (*FRANK shrugs his shoulders and laughs, indicating album.*) This Henry must be a boob. (*Throws album on table.*) I'm not engaging a man who is an imbecile in business matters.

JOYCE (*returning on stairs*). Please excuse Aunt Priscilla, Mr. Burke, whatever she has been saying.

BURKE. What kind of "Willy Boy" is this that you've married, my dear?

JOYCE. He's all I told you. You mustn't mind her. I like to realize he is what he is—in spite of—not because of her. Old people you know never give young people credit for any intelligence of their own.

BURKE. Be careful what you say about old people, my dear. It's dangerous ground. I'm no chicken, myself.

JOYCE. You'll be young when you're ninety. Aunt Priscilla was an old maid when she was born.

(*HENRY enters from front door with more packages, one of which is easily recognizable as a chicken.*)

HENRY. They told me at the club that you'd left. I'm so sorry not to have been there on time. (*Takes off coat and hangs it in hall.*)

FRANK. Uncle was a bit wet, so we didn't wait.

JOYCE. Oh—I didn't notice. Your coat is damp.

BURKE. I'm afraid it is. I'm so sorry—but you see, living alone as I do, I sometimes am careless about appearances.

JOYCE. I wasn't thinking about that. I meant you'd

ONE OF THE FAMILY

catch your death of cold. You should change your things at once.

BURKE. That's the way she used to boss me around the office. Does she make you walk a chalk line, Adams?

(HENRY *laughs*.)

JOYCE. Henry'll get you some dry things.

BURKE. I'm all right, my dear. I wouldn't have been caught without a change, only I played two rounds to-day.

JOYCE. Perhaps you'd like one of Henry's famous cocktails.

BURKE (*pleased*). Cocktails? Ah! But didn't I understand Miss Adams to say that you were a teetotaler?

HENRY. Oh—you saw my aunt?

(JOYCE *signals to HENRY*.)

FRANK. Yes. She regaled us with your many virtues.

HENRY. Outside of that, I'm not such a bad lot, I assure you. As for my being a teetotaler—it makes aunt happy to think so. It was prohibition drove me to drink.

JOYCE. Why, Henry'll give you a cocktail that would— (*Remembering*.) make a chipmunk spit in a bulldog's eye.

HENRY. At least that.

BURKE. This is a delightful surprise.

JOYCE. I'll get Maggie to bring them right in. Harry—you might show Mr. Burke the cup you won at golf. (*Starts to go as BURKE turns to cup on mantel*.)

BURKE (*to FRANK*). Athletic too. From what his aunt said I thought he spent most of his spare time knitting. (*Reads quietly to himself inscription on cup*.)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

HENRY (to JOYCE). Don't forget mine.

(*She goes.*)

BURKE (to HENRY). So—you're a champion?

HENRY (*meeting BURKE*). Oh, no. I had a big handicap. How was *your* game to-day?

BURKE. Off, as usual.

FRANK. Uncle once shot below ninety and now when he doesn't do it, he thinks he's off his game.

HENRY. If I ever shot below ninety, I'd know I was off mine.

BURKE. I'd have been all right to-day, if it hadn't been for the rain. Then I put three balls into the pond on the eleventh. That was enough—

(JOYCE *reënters.*)

JOYCE. Maggie will be right in.

BURKE. And welcome as the birds in spring.
(*Sneezes.*)

JOYCE. You *are* taking cold. You must let Harry get you some dry things.

BURKE. Well, perhaps I will then—after the cocktail. (*Hands loving cup back to FRANK.*)

(MAGGIE *enters with a tray of cocktails.*)

JOYCE (*aside to HENRY*). Yours is the one nearest Maggie's hand.

(*She takes a glass. MAGGIE crosses to FRANK and BURKE. FRANK takes a glass and then BURKE takes the one nearest MAGGIE's hand—the one that was intended for HENRY. MAGGIE looks at him in horror and turns towards JOYCE as if for instructions. HENRY does not realize what has been done and takes the remaining glass. MAGGIE, with a terrified glance at JOYCE, rushes out as quickly as she can.*)

JOYCE. You must excuse the large glasses, Mr. Burke. All our cocktail glasses are broken.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

BURKE. Don't apologize. A good cocktail should be served in a large glass. Your very good health!

(*All drink. JOYCE just sips hers. FRANK is delighted, exclaims "ah" with satisfaction. HENRY takes a taste of his, shows that he likes it, drinks it down steadily. BURKE makes a show of tasting his, tastes it greedily and then looks around with a look of keen disappointment on his face.*)

HENRY (*aside to JOYCE*). This "Five Fruit" stuff is delicious—wonderful.

FRANK. Some cocktail, eh?

BURKE (*sarcastically to FRANK*). Some cocktail is right.

JOYCE. Another?

BURKE. No, thanks. I haven't been able to finish this one.

JOYCE. If you'll excuse me, I'll see that the spare room is ready. (*JOYCE leaves glass on small table. Starts towards stairs left.*) Oh, Henry, get Mr. Burke some dry things to put on. (*Exits upstairs.*)

HENRY. I'll get you some of my own dry linen. I don't know how it'll fit. (*Goes upstairs after JOYCE.*)

BURKE (*alone with FRANK*). What the hell's the idea of this? (*Holds up half empty glass.*) Chipmunk spitting in a bulldog's eye, eh?

FRANK. Mine was all right.

BURKE. I wonder if these prohibitionists are trying to put something over on me. Taste this.

(*FRANK tastes it.*)

FRANK. Mine wasn't like that. (*Tastes it again.*) What do you know about that?

BURKE. What I know about it wouldn't be fit to print. If they think it's a good joke to give a tired, cold, thirsty Irishman a glass of pink lemonade when he expects a real drink.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

FRANK (*laughing*). If you'd seen the disappointment in your face.

BURKE. If you'd tasted the disappointment in my mouth! (FRANK *laughs*.) You're sure you're not in on this? Let me taste yours. (*Points to his glass on table.*)

FRANK. There isn't any left. It isn't the kind you leave. Some kick! Makes your real character come out—

(JOYCE *comes down.*)

BURKE. If you're lying to me—

FRANK. Joyce, you have some more of those cock-tails, haven't you?

JOYCE. Yes. Will Mr. Burke change his mind and have one?

BURKE. Have *one* is right.

FRANK. I'm afraid that by some mistake he got the one originally intended for an Adams.

JOYCE. Oh—I'm so sorry. You must have gotten mine. I thought it was a bit strong and I only tasted it, so if you don't mind sampling it to see if it's all right. (*She holds it out to BURKE.*) Oh, dear, there's something in it. I'll get you another glass. (BURKE *is much annoyed as he almost has the glass in his grasp.*) Go right upstairs, Mr. Burke. Second to the right. We'll send the cocktail up after you. (*Exit into dining room.*)

BURKE. If this is a practical joke, I know of one young man who's going to lose his job.

(HENRY *appears at top of stairs. The cocktail has taken effect. He is slightly exhilarated and more sure of himself.*)

HENRY (*with great manner, comes downstairs*). Second to the right! You'll find some guest towels in the bathroom. Flowers on 'em, and big initials. (BURKE

ONE OF THE FAMILY

crosses HENRY to stairs.) And what's more, we want you to use 'em. That's what we think of you. (*Slaps BURKE on back almost knocking him downstairs.)* Act as valet to your uncle, Owens—you'd be good at that.

(*FRANK is about to reply, thinks better of it and exits.* HENRY dances around the stage as JOYCE enters from kitchen with pitcher of cocktails and glass.)

JOYCE (*speaks on entrance*). Oh, Harry, something terrible has happened. Mr. Burke got your cocktail.

HENRY. Oh, no, he didn't. I got mine and drank it—every bit of it. And when I get a chance, I'm going to have another just like it. Five fruits and everything—

JOYCE. Not another like that one. You drank the real cocktail intended for Mr. Burke.

HENRY. But his was booze. I don't like booze!

JOYCE. Who told you so?

HENRY. Aunt Priscilla.

JOYCE (*hands him pitcher and glass*). I put this in a pitcher, in case you meet any of the family. Take it up to Mr. Burke—if you can—and then lie down a few minutes.

HENRY. What for?

JOYCE. It's going to your head.

HENRY. I don't believe I drank his cocktail. *Wouldn't do such a thing.* (*Pours out some in glass.*) Not that I doubt your word, darling, but we all make mistakes. (*Tastes it.*) You're right. Right as usual. I never knew booze tasted like this. It's delicious. What a fool I've been all these years. (*Pours out another drink.*)

JOYCE. Don't drink it all yourself. Take it up to Mr. Burke.

HENRY. That's right. Selfish of me. Take it up

ONE OF THE FAMILY

to Mr. Burke. (*She goes. HENRY watches her, then sneaks another little sip as he is about to start up.*) And very nice too.

(PEN enters down stairs left.)

PEN. What you got there, Hank?

HENRY (*at foot of stairs*). Curiosity once killed a cat, my child.

PEN (*coming down*). Whatever it is, I'll have some. (*Takes half-filled glass and runs down past him.*)

HENRY (*roused to anger*). Don't touch that you little devil. Give me that, or—(*He follows her.*)

PEN (*keeps away from him*). Keep cool, old dear. (*Smells it.*) Oh juicy fruit! It's a cocktail! (*Down front of table between mantle and settee.*)

HENRY. You don't know what you're talking about.

PEN. I guess I know a cocktail when I taste one. (*Does so.*) The bunch call this one the "Death Rattle." You're stepping some.

HENRY (*follows her, seizing her by wrist*). Give me that.

PEN. Ow! You're hurting me. Henry—you'll break my wrist. I never thought you were so strong. Ow!

HENRY (*twists PEN's wrist*). Put it back—or—or—I'll give you the spanking that's been coming to you all your life.

(*She looks at him, thoroughly cowed, pours contents of glass back into pitcher, backing away from him frightened. HENRY starts for stairs, just as AUNT and LUCY come down. LUCY has the copy of Town Talk.*)

AUNT. Where are you going? What have you there?

HENRY. Not that it's any one's business, but if you must know, it's—orangeade—orangeade for Mr. Burke.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

A hell of a drink for an Irishman, isn't it? (*Looking pugnaciously at them.*)

PEN. Don't you believe it, aunt. It's a cocktail, and your angel nephew is on the way to one of the prettiest buns I've ever seen.

AUNT. So that's what's the matter! *Buns!* No wonder you haven't seen what your wife's been up to.

HENRY. Joyce hasn't anything to do with this.

AUNT. I don't mean your disgusting condition. Have you read that? (*Points to magazine which LUCY holds up.*)

HENRY. Sure. Saw it to-day.

AUNT. I don't often interfere with your personal affairs, but when the honor of the family becomes the subject of a public scandal—

HENRY. What has the poor prune, Frank Owens, to do with the family honor?

AUNT. Are you so intoxicated that you don't know it's about your wife?

HENRY. What rot! That's too silly to even get angry about.

AUNT. He was calling on her when we arrived.

HENRY. I don't believe it. She knows I don't like him.

AUNT. Probably that's why she was seeing him while you were away.

HENRY (*puts pitcher down on desk*). He couldn't have been here. She would have told me.

LUCY. Maybe she didn't want you to know. She hadn't told you about these other times.

HENRY. There's not a word of truth in it!

AUNT. We are not accustomed to lie to you, Henry, or to be accused of lying.

HENRY (*angrier*). I'd believe it about any one else in the world, but not Joyce! (*Suddenly—almost yell-*

ONE OF THE FAMILY

ing.) Say—are you trying to insinuate that she'd do anything behind my back? (*JOYCE enters.*) That she would—

JOYCE. Harry—you're yelling loud enough to be heard in the village. What's the matter?

AUNT. Ask her yourself.

HENRY. I wouldn't insult her.

JOYCE. Ask me what?

AUNT. Wasn't Mr. Owens here when we called?

JOYCE. Why, yes.

AUNT (*gloating*). Ah!

LUCY. And very intimate too. Hanging a picture for her—

PEN. A naked picture.

AUNT. Nude.

JOYCE. What's it all about, Harry?

HENRY (*pointing*). They read this article. And Owens was here—

JOYCE. You don't believe it's about me? That I—

HENRY. Of course I don't. You couldn't help it if he called. But if he thinks he can get my wife talked about, and get away with it, I'll show him—(*Bell rings.*) I never liked him anyway. (*JOYCE, worried, goes to front door.*) The nerve of him.

AUNT. We'll be the laughing stock of Boston. An Adams was never in a scandal before. Henry, why did you ever marry her?

(*JOYCE enters with GEORGE and IRENE. GEORGE takes off hat and coat, puts them on hall chair.*)

IRENE (*comes center*). Hello, everybody. Why didn't you wait for me? I came home just a minute after you left. (*Sees there is a tenseness in the air.*) Why—aunty—what's the matter?

LUCY (*with magazine*). We were just discussing this. Have you seen it?

ONE OF THE FAMILY

IRENE (*excitedly*). There isn't a word of truth in it. You certainly don't believe that filthy blackmailing sheet, do you?

AUNT. That's very kind of you, Irene, to take another's part. I admire you for it. But Joyce will have to answer for herself.

IRENE. Joyce? Oh, yes. I was afraid— I thought—

AUNT. You thought to shield her, but it's too late.

JOYCE. *You* don't think it's about me, do you, Irene?

HENRY (*his mind starting to work through the alcohol*). Why couldn't it be about Irene?

AUNT. Irene is a Cabot.

IRENE. Why, I haven't seen Frank in months. You know I haven't, Georgie.

HENRY. We'll ask Owens himself. He's upstairs. (IRENE *is frightened*.) Owens! Frank Owens! (FRANK *appears at top of stairs*. HENRY *points to magazine in LUCY's hand*.) Have you read this about yourself?

FRANK (*coming down*). Why—er—yes.

IRENE. Henry thinks it means me. Tell them it doesn't, Frank.

FRANK (*on stairs*). Certainly it doesn't. I'm going to see the editor about it. When I'm through with him, he'll be only too glad to print a denial. I never allow any one to insult me and get away with it.

(HENRY *watches him, disbelieving*.)

IRENE. Tell them you haven't seen me in months.

FRANK. That's perfectly true. I haven't had the pleasure of seeing Irene—in, let me see—it must be nearer two months than one.

(IRENE *joins GEORGE*.)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. There is no need of this, Mr. Owens. We all know that the article is about you and Joyce.

(FRANK shows his astonishment at this accusation.)

HENRY (losing his temper). Owens, if you've been hanging around my wife, and getting her talked about—

JOYCE. Harry!

FRANK. Here—what's the idea? Whom do you think you're talking to?

HENRY. Did you come here to-day to see my wife?

FRANK. I won't be questioned by you. Where I go, and what I do is *my* business. What do you think I am?

HENRY. If you want to know, I think you're a damn cad!

(Exclamations by all.)

FRANK. See here—I'll allow no one to call me that! (He bristles up threateningly.)

HENRY (standing up to him). I called you that.

JOYCE. Don't be ridiculous, Harry. You're acting like a child. You're only making matters worse.

HENRY (pushing JOYCE away). This is my affair, and I want every one else to keep out. I'll show this bounder—

GEORGE. Lay off him, Henry. He's a fighter.

(FRANK smiles at this and crosses away from HENRY.)

HENRY (throws GEORGE aside). Whom did he ever fight?

FRANK (patronizingly). I've been very patient with you, Adams, because—well, the rest understand. I have no wish to hurt you, but you've insulted me—grossly—before all these people. If you'll apologize—

GEORGE (between them). Be a good fellow and excuse him, Owens. He isn't quite himself. Henry, for heaven's sake, think of your job.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

HENRY (*throws GEORGE aside again*). To hell with my job! Apologize, eh? He's insulted my wife! He knows I know he's a cad! (*Confronts FRANK again.*)

FRANK. Look here, I simply won't tolerate—

HENRY. Oh, you won't? Well, Mr. Bulldog Owens, do you know what I think of you? You're a bluff! If you were a fighter, you'd have hit me when I called you what you are.

(*Pushes him. Exclamations. Sees FRANK doesn't resent it and follows him as he backs away.*)

FRANK. I wouldn't hit a man smaller than myself. (HENRY, *in glee, pushes him again.*) Take him away before I forget myself. (HENRY *gives him a third push.*) You're drunk.

(JOYCE *goes to GEORGE; appeals to him. AUNT and LUCY are horror-stricken, PEN is delighted.*)

HENRY. If I am, it's fighting drunk! Never hit a man smaller than yourself, eh? Did you ever hit any one? (*He puts his face pugnaciously near FRANK'S.*)

(JOYCE *is becoming exasperated, and tries to drag him away.*)

FRANK. Keep him away from me. I may hurt him.

HENRY (*breaks away from JOYCE*). I never have hit any one myself, so we start even. See how you like it, you big bluffing four-flusher! (*Hits him.*)

FRANK (*terrified*). I'll sue you for assault. (*Trying to back away, gets behind large table.*)

HENRY. Now, I know you're yellow.

(FRANK *grabs lamp and threatens HENRY.*)

FRANK. Keep back!

AUNT. Irene's lamp!

HENRY. Go on—throw it—it's only a wedding present.

(FRANK *throws the lamp. HENRY dodges and it hits stairs. Women scream. JOYCE tries to drag*

ONE OF THE FAMILY

HENRY away. FRANK rushes for stairs trying to get away, HENRY follows him.)

HENRY. He isn't a fighter! He's a sprinter!

(FRANK trips on stairs, HENRY catches him by the foot and pulls him back. They roll over and then get to their feet. As they do so, they smash the umbrella stand at which the Adamses are again horror-stricken. HENRY lands several good blows on FRANK whose one idea is to get away. His punishment is terrific, and he finally breaks away and rushes through the doors leading to the sun porch. HENRY follows him. There is a crash as if a body had gone through a pane of glass. The noise of the fight continues and PEN and Irene rush up to view it, followed by LUCY and AUNT.)

JOYCE. I can't stand this! (Seizes the poker from the fireplace.)

GEORGE (horrified). Joyce! No! You'll kill him!

JOYCE. I'm not going to hit him! I'm going to finish the wedding presents.

(She turns to the mantel and is seen demolishing the vases and the picture.)

CURTAIN.

ACT III

Same scene as in Act II, a few minutes later. The place is in terrible disorder. The chairs are overturned, the lamp is smashed, the vases are in pieces, the gargoyle is lying back of a chair, unseen by the audience. The "Sam Adams" chair is broken, the picture is hanging on its ear with the glass smashed and a large hole in the center. MAGGIE enters from the dining room. She looks at the room in dismay.

MAGGIE. Oh, Glory! (*Gives another glance around.*) Land sakes alive! (*Shakes her head.*) Oh, well— (*She tucks up her skirt and goes for the dining room, singing, returning immediately with a broom. She picks up the "Sam Adams" chair, and puts the débris in the hall, replacing it with another chair. She brushes the broken pieces of vases, lamp, etc., into small piles and starts towards the dining room when she sees her "statuette." Sadly.*) Oh! (*Picks it up, sees it is unbroken. Gladly.*) Ah! (*Replaces it on desk, just as BURKE enters from upstairs. He has on a coat of HENRY'S and a pair of HENRY'S slippers.*)

BURKE. For the love of— What struck the place?

MAGGIE. They had a fight.

BURKE. Who had?

MAGGIE. I didn't see it. All I know is it makes more work for me. If they must fight, I wish they'd do it outside. (*Goes on with her work, making an exit to the dining room for a dust pan and brush and returning immediately. IRENE rushes in excitedly from the sun porch.*)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

IRENE. Oh, Mr. Burke— I'm so glad you're here. Come quickly, your nephew is unconscious.

(GEORGE enters in time to hear the last words from the sun porch.)

BURKE. What!

GEORGE. Nonsense, Irene. He'll be all right. He's just out for the time being.

IRENE. This is Mr. Burke, George. Frank's uncle.

BURKE. Was my nephew fighting some one?

GEORGE. Rather say some one was fighting your nephew.

IRENE. It was brutal! Frank didn't have a chance to defend himself.

BURKE. But who did it? What started it? Where is he?

IRENE. On the sun porch. Joyce is helping us bring him to. (BURKE hurriedly goes to sun porch. IRENE stops GEORGE.) Here's your chance, George. Play up to Burke and pretend you like Frank.

GEORGE. But I think Henry was more or less right.

IRENE. It may mean he'll give you the position he intended for Henry.

GEORGE. Oh—I see. (Nods understandingly.)

IRENE. But be careful before Joyce.

(MAGGIE has been out of the way, cleaning up and has not heard the last conversation.)

GEORGE. All right. Get some water. (Exit to sun porch.)

IRENE. Some water, Maggie.

MAGGIE. Oh, glory! I have too much to do to be without traipsin' after water. (Crosses to the fireplace.)

IRENE. But the man may be dying.

MAGGIE. Small loss if it's that cake eater. (Brushing up by fireplace.)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

(IRENE looks around, sees pitcher of cocktails and glass that HENRY has left in preceding act, seizes them and starts for sun porch just as PEN enters from dining room.)

PEN. I'll take that! Aunt's being hysterical in the dining room. (*Seizes pitcher.*)

IRENE. I want it for Frank.

PEN. Well—fifty-fifty. (*Takes pitcher, pours out drink in glass and lets IRENE keep glass.*) How is Mr. Owens?

IRENE. One eye is closed, his nose is bleeding, and I think he has lost a tooth.

PEN. Henry always was thorough.

IRENE. It's disgusting. Mr. Burke will never forgive him, and I'm glad of it. (*Starts for sun porch as JOYCE enters, all excitement.*)

JOYCE. Get some hot water, Maggie, please. I'll get the witch hazel and bandages. (*Starts for stairs.*)
(IRENE goes.)

PEN. Where's Hank?

JOYCE. I don't know. He went out. (*Goes upstairs.*)

MAGGIE (*disgusted*). Oh, Glory—first it's cold water, and then it's hot water. Nobody knows what they want in this house. (*She goes into the dining room. PEN starts for the dining room, hears the front door slam and waits. HENRY enters. He comes in flushed with victory and looks around as if expecting a welcome. No one is there but PEN.*)

PEN. Here he is now—himself in person! Good boy, Hank, you protected your honor like a movie hero. (*HENRY looks at her very much annoyed.*) Oh—all right. (*Exit to dining room.*)

(HENRY crosses to sun porch, looks in and returns.)

HENRY. Bulldog Owens, eh? (*He swaggers to*

ONE OF THE FAMILY

center of stage just as JOYCE enters downstairs, carrying the witch hazel and the bandages.)

JOYCE. Oh—you're back. Where did you go?

HENRY. Just wandering around.

JOYCE. Doing what?

HENRY. Thinking.

JOYCE. Gloating. *(Starts for sun porch.)* Why don't you help with Frank?

HENRY. Help! If I saw him drowning, I'd turn the hose on him.

JOYCE. I hope you're satisfied.

HENRY. Well, I guess he'll stay clear of other men's wives for a while.

(JOYCE goes onto the sun porch. HENRY looks around the room, shrugs shoulders, starts to cross to stairs, sees MAGGIE'S "statuette" on desk. A look of hate comes into his eyes. He seizes it, grins at it in derision and smashes it on the ground. JOYCE returns.)

JOYCE. What was that?

HENRY. One you overlooked.

JOYCE. I'm ashamed of you.

HENRY. Why—I thought you'd be pleased. It was on your account I did it.

JOYCE. Don't you see that your defense was more insulting than your family's accusation? They only *thought* it was true. Now they'll be sure of it. Just as you are.

HENRY. Why—I know it couldn't be true.

JOYCE. Then why didn't you treat it with the contempt it deserved? You made all your family think that I was guilty—that I needed protection.

HENRY. I never thought of it in that way.

JOYCE. You didn't think at all. You never liked Frank—you were jealous—you saw red—and like a

ONE OF THE FAMILY

man—you believed you could settle everything by punching some one.

HENRY. Maybe. I know I've been wanting to hit that bird ever since I've known him, and the suppressed desire of my subconscious ego came out a little strong.

JOYCE (*sits in chair, center*). I never thought I'd see my husband in a drunken brawl.

HENRY. Well, he had it coming to him. He was crazy about you before we were married, and he had no right to hang around—

JOYCE (*rising*). There—you *do* believe the article.

HENRY. I certainly don't believe anything wrong about you, but when you let a man like that call on you, he does get you talked about.

JOYCE. That's what I said—you *do* believe he was calling on me.

HENRY. But they saw him—you admitted it. That's why I fought.

JOYCE. I admitted he was *here*. Not that he was calling on me. I'm not the only wife in the Adams Family. (*Crosses to settee.*)

HENRY. What? Then he *did* come to see Irene? (*She nods.*) Well, I am a fool. I might have known. (*Pause.*) But she—she came later with George.

JOYCE. There was nothing to prevent him taking her to the station below and putting her on the train there so George could meet her, was there?

HENRY. Of course. And she tried to put the blame on you! Well— (*In anger he starts for sun porch.*)

JOYCE. Whom are you going to punch now? Irene? Haven't you done enough harm for one day? If you'd been sober, you'd have kept still and not made a spectacle of yourself.

HENRY. If I had been sober, I wouldn't have had the courage to have done it.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

JOYCE. I really think you're proud of yourself.

HENRY. Well, it *was* the first time I ever had the nerve to hit any one.

JOYCE. The first stranger that you think is rude to your wife you nearly kill. But your family can slight and humiliate her to their heart's content, and you never do a thing.

HENRY. I can't punch my family.

JOYCE. You can *say* something, can't you?

HENRY. Now, darling, you know—they meant it all kindly—

JOYCE (*starting to cry*). You're always making excuses for them. I notice you never do for me.

HENRY. Oh, yes, I do, darling. Often.

JOYCE (*turns on him*). Oh—you apologize for me to your family? What about? What do I do that needs to be excused to them?

HENRY. But, sweetheart, you just said—

JOYCE. I've stood about all I can from that family of yours. (*Crosses to stairs.*) I know they all hate me. (*He starts to protest.*) Oh, yes, they do—even more than I dislike them. Ever since our marriage all any of them have ever done is to try and make me miserable. Trying to rule our lives and telling us what we must and must not do. I tell you, Harry, I can't go on with it much longer. They've gotten on my nerves. I've got to get away.

HENRY. But, darling—

JOYCE (*on stairs, weeping*). Oh, I hate Adamses—I hate Boston. (*Sobbing.*) I hate myself! (*Exit upstairs. HENRY starts to follow her.*)

HENRY. Joyce—listen.

(*GEORGE enters from sun porch.*)

GEORGE. Where's that hot water?

HENRY (*turns on him*). Why don't you do your

ONE OF THE FAMILY

own dirty work? Why the hell don't you keep your wife at home where she belongs, instead of letting her come out here to wreck my life. I had a home once! Now look at the damn thing. (*Follows JOYCE upstairs.*)

(PEN *has entered during the last part of this speech, still bearing the pitcher of cocktails. She and GEORGE look after HENRY, speechless with amazement.*)

GEORGE. He's crazy.

PEN. I'd hate to have his headache to-morrow morning.

GEORGE (*recovering, starts after him*). Henry—listen—I won't allow you to speak that way about Irene.

PEN. Better let him alone. You're not even as big as Frank Owens.

GEORGE. I guess you're right. (*Comes down.*) How's aunt? Is she stewed too?

PEN. She's all right. I can tell by the set of her lips that some one is in for it.

GEORGE. Gosh—what an afternoon.

PEN. I'd never have to go out for excitement if every day at home was like this.

(AUNT and LUCY *enter from dining room.*)

AUNT. Salts—salts—my smelling salts.

PEN. Won't you *taste* a bit of this, aunty?

AUNT. I told you I wanted salts, not liquor!

GEORGE. That reminds me— (*Exit to dining room.*)

PEN. It'll brace you up.

AUNT. I never break the law! (*Sarcastically.*) Polish for the car! Huh!

PEN (*puts pitcher on the table*). It polished up Frank Owens!

AUNT. Just look at this place. (*Looks at picture.*)

ONE OF THE FAMILY

Your picture, Lucy. (*Shakes head.*) The Declaration of Independence!—Signed by two Adamses!

LUCY. And your beautiful vases—

AUNT. Ah, Henry was so fond of them. I'll get him another pair. Poor Henry.

(*PEN sits.*)

LUCY. Then you're not angry with him?

AUNT. An Adams never bears a grudge, and somehow I can't blame him entirely.

LUCY. But he was intoxicated.

PEN. Intoxicated? Plastered!

AUNT. Undoubtedly that wife of his drove him to it. From the first moment I set eyes on her, I knew she wasn't to be trusted!

(*GEORGE comes from dining room, with basin and towel.*)

GEORGE. Burke is furious about Owens. I hate to think what he'll do to Henry. (*He goes to sun porch.*)

LUCY. That means Henry is without a position.

PEN. And we're without allowances.

AUNT. I'll use my influence with Mr. Burke. He must be made to reëngage Henry.

LUCY. It's all right to *say* he must, but how?

(*BURKE enters from sun porch.*)

BURKE. Where's your nephew?

AUNT. Why—I don't know. Did you want to see him?

BURKE. When I lay my hands on that little Fauntleroy he'll wish he were back in the washbowl.

AUNT. Why, Mr. Burke, aren't you a bit hard on Henry?

BURKE. Have you seen what he did to my nephew?

AUNT. It was Mr. Owens' fault. Mr. Owens spoke very rudely to Henry and when Henry remonstrated—

ONE OF THE FAMILY

BURKE. Remonstrated? Well, that's a new name for it.

(Enter GEORGE and FRANK and then IRENE. FRANK is badly battered up, head bandaged, eye black, face scarred, teeth out in front, speaks with a lisp, owing to absence of teeth.)

GEORGE (*speaks as he enters*). Come on—buck up! You'll be all right.

FRANK. What hit me?

(*They place FRANK on settee.*)

BURKE. Almost everything in the room from the looks of it.

FRANK. He couldn't have knocked me out all by himself!

BURKE. No, I don't see how he could. The whole damned family must have been in on it. (*To GEORGE.*) Well, what did you hit him with?

IRENE. Oh, Mr. Burke, George never touched him. We like Frank and tried our best to drag Henry off. It was only Henry—really!

BURKE. That mamma's boy knocked out Frank all by himself!

FRANK. He hit me when I wasn't looking. He didn't fight fair!

IRENE. He threw the vases and everything at poor Frank.

GEORGE. No. Joyce smashed them.

BURKE. But what started it?

GEORGE. Well, he was—

AUNT. Mr. Owens was very rude to Henry and when Henry remonstrated—

(*All start to talk at once.*)

BURKE. Wait a minute—not from any of you. Frank, if he hit you—he must have had some good reason for it.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

LUCY. It was that article in *Town Talk* about Joyce and Mr. Owens.

FRANK. I'll kill that editor.

BURKE. You'd better kill somebody if you want your reputation back.

FRANK. I'll sue Henry for assault—for heavy damages.

(He spits out tooth during speech, picks it up off floor and ties it in handkerchief to save it.)

BURKE. You'll take your licking like a man and like it. What did you hang around his wife for, anyway?

FRANK. I didn't. I never even called on her since she was his wife.

BURKE. Then it wasn't Joyce you were lallygagging with?

FRANK. No, I tell you— Certainly not!

GEORGE. But you said—if it wasn't Joyce— *(A light begins to dawn.)* That's what Henry meant when he told me to look after *my* wife! *(Turns on IRENE.)* It was you!

IRENE. No, Georgie, darling, really. I don't know what you mean.

GEORGE. Don't lie to me! *(To FRANK.)* I'm the one that should have beaten you up. *(He starts for FRANK.)*

BURKE *(stops him)*. Hold on. He's had enough for to-day.

GEORGE *(to IRENE)*. And you tried to put the blame on Joyce! Didn't I tell you not to go around with him?

AUNT. Irene! Not you!

IRENE. I only did it because he promised he'd get George a position with his uncle.

BURKE. He'd get *what*? *(To FRANK angrily.)* Since when were you handing out my jobs? You

ONE OF THE FAMILY

couldn't even hold one down yourself. We'll go upstairs and wash your face, and I'll change my clothes and get out of here. (*Helping FRANK to his feet.*) Why couldn't you have taken after your Irish mother? (*Starts upstairs with him.*) Bulldog Owens, eh? Go on—pussycat Owens!

FRANK (*lisp*ing). Where do you get that stuff? Pussycat Owens? (*Exit upstairs.*)

AUNT. But Mr. Burke—now that you know that Henry was only fighting because the family honor was in jeopardy—surely you'll reëngage him!

BURKE. With a family like you hanging around his neck? I should say not!

AUNT. But you inveigled him from his former position.

BURKE. I did what?

AUNT. Inveigled!

IRENE. But George didn't do anything, and—

BURKE. I don't want any of you around me! I'm through with the whole Adams tribe!

(BURKE *exits upstairs*. PEN *looks around*, then *seizes pitcher of cocktails and follows BURKE upstairs.*)

GEORGE (*to IRENE*). I'm ashamed of you.

IRENE. Oh, what's the use of all this fuss? It's all over and done for. What if I did flirt with Frank? You wouldn't take me anywhere. Naturally I didn't want to be caught. Joyce would have done the same thing!

GEORGE. Why—you're the cause of the whole row! We're going to have a long talk together, young lady. (*He points to dining room.*) Alone! (*Pushes IRENE out. AUNT and LUCY start to follow him. GEORGE stops them at door.*) Alone!

(*He exits. AUNT looks at LUCY and they follow*

ONE OF THE FAMILY

into dining room. HENRY comes downstairs. He is very much dejected. He comes down and sinks sadly on a chair, among the débris of the fight. PEN follows him down steps.)

PEN. What's the matter, Hank? The morning-after feeling already?

HENRY. She locked the door, and won't let me in.

PEN. Mad?

HENRY. She won't listen to me. No one understands me.

PEN. Now—you've got a crying jag. (*Pulls handkerchief out of his pocket.*)

HENRY (*grabs handkerchief away from her, puts it back*). Oh, get out and mind your own business. You're as bad as any of them.

PEN. You'll be seeing pink elephants and orange kangaroos in a minute.

HENRY. I'm perfectly sober. Too sober. I wish I *could* drink and forget. You and the rest of the family have been trying to break up my marriage. And now you've done it.

PEN. I haven't done anything, Hank. Honest, I haven't.

HENRY. She's leaving me, I tell you. She's packing her bag!

(*PEN sees she can do nothing with him and starts to go just as AUNT and LUCY enter from dining room. PEN starts to AUNT; AUNT pushes her aside.*)

AUNT. Henry—Irene has just done a very big thing. She has taken all the blame for Joyce's indiscretions.

HENRY. What do you mean—Joyce's indiscretions? Has Irene told the truth at last?

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. You shouldn't receive it like that. You should be big enough to forgive Irene—as we have.

HENRY. What have you to forgive? If Irene has confessed that she lied and tried to put the blame on Joyce, she should ask forgiveness from Joyce.

AUNT. She was only doing it for George's sake. You should be glad that she had your brother's interest so to heart.

HENRY. For George's sake? Rats!

AUNT. She wanted to get him a good position with Mr. Burke.

HENRY. Mine, I suppose. At least the one that was to have been mine. When Joyce worked to get it for me in a perfectly legitimate manner, you objected, but when Irene tries to do the same thing for George, in a darned underhand manner, that's wonderful!

AUNT. That doesn't sound like you, Henry. We all make mistakes. And Mr. Owens *was* here.

PEN. Oh, lay off him. Joyce is walking out on him.

AUNT. What?

LUCY. Leaving him? (PEN *nods*.)

AUNT. Ah, ha! (*Gloating*.) I always knew she wasn't worthy of an Adams.

HENRY (*rises, indignantly*). Not worthy of an Adams? Why, the Smiths were governors of Virginia before the Adamses ever thought of booking up on that overcrowded Mayflower excursion.

AUNT. No wife ever left an Adams before, save for the churchyard. I suppose I should be sorry, but truly I feel that it is all for the best. You'll be coming home again, and after the divorce— (HENRY *winces*.) your aunt and your sisters will keep you pleasantly entertained.

HENRY. Do you think I'd ever go back to that morgue in Boston to be an object of pity, after three

ONE OF THE FAMILY

months of the only freedom and happiness I've ever known? Do you suppose I want to watch your "I told you so" expressions for the rest of my life?

AUNT. Why, Henry, how can you say that you've never been happy or free? You've always had everything you wanted.

HENRY. Sure—just as long as I've wanted what you wanted me to want. I've been supervised and personally conducted since babyhood. When was I ever allowed to choose my own way? I wanted to go to Yale. You wanted me to go to Harvard.

AUNT. But we compromised.

HENRY. Yes, we compromised. I went to Harvard.

AUNT. No real gentleman would ever think of any place but Harvard.

HENRY. Oh, that wasn't the only thing. Every time I even spoke to a girl, you had a fainting attack.

AUNT. Why, Henry—you know I always said I wanted you to get married some day—when the right girl came along.

HENRY. But no girl I ever looked at seemed to be the right one. Oh, stop that silly crying.

AUNT (*stopping immediately*). Henry!

HENRY. I had a wonderful opportunity with Mr. Burke, and you managed to get that away from me—and now Joyce is leaving me.

AUNT. Leaving you? Deserting you, you mean—and why—why?

HENRY. Because she can't stand any of you any longer. The way you've acted towards her—

AUNT. Ridiculous. We've always treated her like one of the family.

HENRY. Perhaps that's the trouble.

AUNT (*exclaims*). Oh, Henry!

HENRY. Well, you wanted the truth. She is going,

ONE OF THE FAMILY

because of *you*. Because you wouldn't let us live our own lives. Because you had to interfere in everything we tried to do. Because you've slighted her and humiliated her ever since we've been married. I didn't know it myself until to-day, but I realize it now. You've begrudged her every moment of happiness, and even when she kept silent to shield Irene you all insulted her so that I marvel at her patience. (*AUNT rises. HENRY follows.*) Oh, I was just as bad as the rest of you. But I'll tell you all one thing. If you ever expect to have me even speak to you again, you're all going to apologize to her—and you're going to be damn humble about it—

MAGGIE (*enters from dining room*). Dinner's ready. (*Goes out.*)

HENRY. Oh, my God! (*He sinks down in a chair and buries his head in his hands.*)

AUNT. Don't get sick, Henry! She isn't worth it!

HENRY (*sitting up*). She is worth it! She's worth more than the whole lot of you put together! She's more to me than all the Adamses that ever lived.

AUNT (*shocked*). You're speaking of your own flesh and blood. The family that God gave you!

HENRY. Don't blame God for everything.

AUNT. Well, He did give you your family.

HENRY. Perhaps—but I picked Joyce myself. (*She takes a step nearer to him.*)

AUNT. And a bad choice it seems to have been. She's through with you. Your family won't leave you.

HENRY. No such luck.

AUNT. What has come over you? You're talking like a baby.

HENRY. No, I'm talking like an Adams. (*Looks towards picture.*) This is my Declaration of Independence. I'm through with all of you.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT. But what will *we* do without *you*?

LUCY. Yes—what about us? Don't you owe us something? What about our allowances?

HENRY. So that's it! Now we get to the bottom of things. It isn't me you want! It's the damn money. Well, I haven't any, any more, so I guess you'll have to struggle along on your incomes.

AUNT. You won't come home with us?

HENRY. Home—home—to that place where for all these years I've had all the responsibilities of a Mormon and none of his advantages? Not much!

LUCY. Come, aunt. We won't stay here to be insulted.

AUNT. Yes—we'll leave—right after dinner.

(She sweeps into the dining room, followed by LUCY and PEN. A pause, JOYCE comes downstairs. She has on her hat and coat and carries a traveling bag. She starts for the front door, sees HENRY, stops and goes over to him.)

JOYCE. I'm going, Harry.

HENRY. But, Joyce, you can't go like this.

JOYCE. I must.

HENRY. But dearest—I can't get away. We have this house.

JOYCE. Maybe you can't get away, but I can and will—

HENRY. You'd go away without me? Don't you love me any more?

JOYCE. I love you dearly, Henry. But there's not room for your family and me in the same world.

HENRY. But what are you going to do?

JOYCE. I wish I knew. For nights I've stayed awake trying to reason things out. I've tried to help you get out of your rut. I worked to get you this new position where you'd have a chance to advance.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

I've tried to like your family, and I know that I'll go mad if I don't get away somewhere. Anywhere.

HENRY. All right, dear. We'll go away. I'll arrange it somehow.

JOYCE (*starting for door*). I'm going alone.

(HENRY rises.)

HENRY. Alone. (*Confronting her. Enter PEN, AUNT, LUCY, also BURKE on stairs with pitcher and glass.*) You'll do nothing of the kind. We agreed in all the big things you were to give way to me. This is the biggest thing that has ever come into our lives. We're going away, but we're going together!

BURKE. Do you mean that, Henry?

HENRY. Yes, I mean it. I don't know where we're going, but we're going. And the farther away the better!

BURKE. As far from the family as possible?

HENRY (*determined*). Yes, sir!

BURKE (*lifts his glass to HENRY and drinks his health.*) I'm opening up two new branches next month—one in Ohio, and one in California. I need a man that knows how to take care of himself, and you've proved that you can do that. You can have your choice—Ohio or California.

JOYCE. Oh, Harry—just think—California.

HENRY (*overjoyed*). California!

(JOYCE goes into his arms.)

AUNT (*sitting down happily*). California! A trip to California would do us all good.

(*The girls gather around her. JOYCE picks up her bag and starts for the door. HENRY stops her.*

BURKE pours out a drink and hands it to HENRY who thanks him with a glance and drains it down.

HENRY then seizes JOYCE by the hand, goes

ONE OF THE FAMILY

towards AUNT and points at her in a threatening manner.)

HENRY. Now you listen to me! When in the course of human events it becomes necessary to sever the bonds—

(He goes on reciting his own Declaration of Independence to the bewilderment of the other Adamses and the delight of JOYCE and BURKE.)

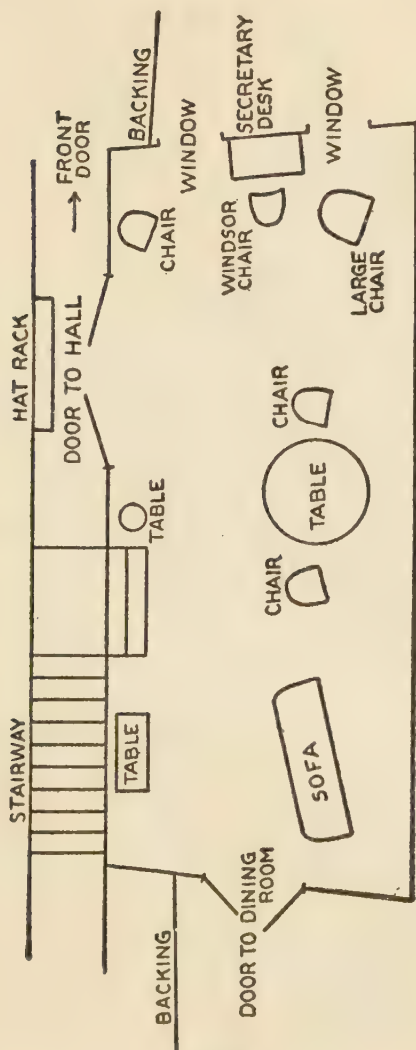
CURTAIN

PROPERTY LIST

Act I

1 rug
1 large table
2 small tables
1 secretary desk
1 hatrack
1 sofa
5 chairs
Rogers Group on small table
Fern on wall
Window curtains
Papers, magazines, etc., on table
1 post card
Several letters
1 box with green cloak, bill attached
1 fountain pen
Money
1 dress suit case
1 copy of the *Boston Evening Transcript*
3 small packages
Small picture in desk drawer
Picture of Puritan gentleman
 " " Samuel Adams
 " " other Colonial gentleman
 " " Civil War officer
 " " gentlemen of 1812
 " " " " 1840
 " " " " 1880
 " " Civil War time lady
 " " Colonial lady.

ONE OF THE FAMILY.



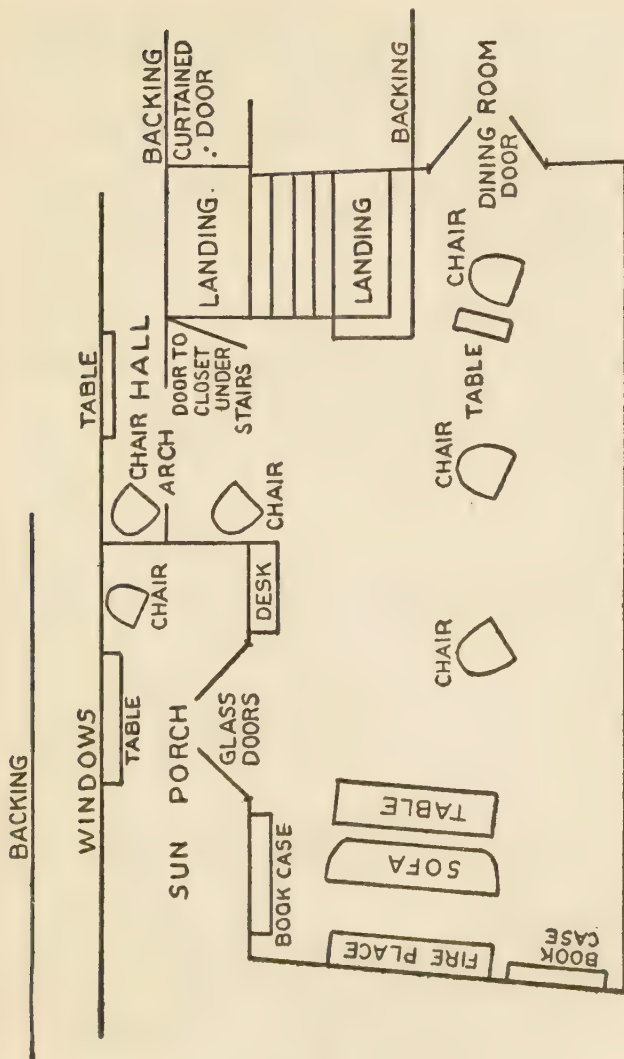
STAGE PLAN FOR ACT I.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

Acts II and III

- I rug
- I sofa
- I table
- 3 small tables
- 6 chairs
- 2 bookcases
- I desk
- 2 ugly vases on mantel
- I bowl of flowers on mantel
- I golf cup on mantel
- Magazines on table
- I ugly lamp on table
- I statuette of gargoyle on desk
- I album of baby pictures on desk
- I small vase of flowers on desk
- I large picture of "Declaration of Independence"
- I large picture of nude subject
- I small lamp on table
- I umbrella stand
- 3 pictures for wall
- 3 wall brackets for light.
- 5 glasses
- I glass pitcher filled with orange-colored drink
- I tray
- I pencil
- I list of groceries
- I dust pan
- I brush
- I dust cloth
- I wash basin
- 2 towels
- I gauze bandage
- I bottle witch hazel

ONE OF THE FAMILY



STAGE PLAN FOR ACTS II. AND III.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

- 4 cigars
- 5 magazines, including *Atlantic Monthly*, *Literary Digest* and *Review of Reviews*
- 1 copy *Town Talk*
- 1 bottle containing same colored liquid as pitcher
- 1 Boston bag
- 1 prop chicken, wrapped up with feet out
- 9 packages of various sizes
- 1 check book
- 1 poker
- 1 tongs, shovel, etc.
- 1 broom
- 1 broken chair in, *Act III*, to replace "Sam Adams" chair in *Act II*
- 1 suit case
- 1 small step-ladder

COSTUME PLOT

HENRY ADAMS:

Act I. Dark business suit, soft hat.

Act II. Light business suit, rain coat, soft hat.

GEORGE ADAMS:

Act I. Light business suit, straw hat.

Act II. Dark business suit, rain coat, soft hat.

FRANK OWENS:

Act I. Very stylish business suit, straw hat.

Act II. Very stylish business suit, overcoat, soft hat.

MARTIN BURKE:

Act I. Does not appear.

Act II. Golf suit, cap.

Act III. Golf trousers, dark coat, slippers.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

AUNT PRISCILLA:

Act I. Afternoon dress, hat, wrap.

Act II. Afternoon dress, hat, rain coat, rubbers.

(Her clothes should be suitable for well-dressed woman of fifty.)

JOYCE SMITH:

Act I. Pretty suit or dress, suitable for traveling, hat.

Act II. House dress or bungalow apron, dinner dress.

Act III. Same as Act II; also a coat and hat as if she were going away hurriedly.

LUCY ADAMS:

Act I. Afternoon dress, rather severe, hat.

Act II. Afternoon dress, coat, hat.

PENELOPE ADAMS:

Act I. Afternoon dress, hat.

Act II. Afternoon dress, raincoat, hat (dresses should be suitable for a young girl of about eighteen or twenty.)

IRENE ADAMS:

Act I. Afternoon dress, hat.

Act II. Afternoon dress, coat, hat. (She wears rather fluffy clothes.)

MAGGIE:

Act I. Gingham dress, white apron.

Act II. Black dress with white collars and cuffs, white apron, gingham apron, coat or old-fashioned cape, rather eccentric hat.

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